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THE

FRIGATE AND THE LUGGER.

CHAPTER I.

On the day that Julian Arden landed from the 'Onyx,' Lieutenant Thornton, Mademoiselle De Tourville, and her friend Julia Plessis having made arrangements for a day's excursion, proceeded to visit a place long celebrated in that part of the country, and known as the Hermit's grotto.

This hermitage was not more than a couple of miles from the Chateau Coulancourt, and was

reached by traversing a road leading through a picturesque country.

The tradition that rendered this grotto celebrated was that for nearly one hundred years it was the residence of a holy man, who had subsisted principally on the water from a well, that rose within the grotto, and said to possess peculiar properties. In fact there is scarcely a rural village of France that has not its legend of a holy man, or hermit, dwelling in the neighbourhood; but one remaining in the same place a hundred years seemed marvellous; for, even allowing that he commenced his holy life at the age of twenty, the worthy recluse must have been of a very respectable age when he departed from earth, and a desire would have arisen in the minds of the young people to make a pilgrimage to such a hallowed spot had not Mademoiselle Plessis declared that the scenery in the vicinity of the grotto was exceedingly beautiful, and talked enthusiastically of the cascade, piles of curious rocks, and a spot like the Perte du Rhone, near Geneva, where the little river entirely dis-

appeared, and then came sparkling and dashing out of the rocks, some hundred yards from where it had been lost to view.

Monsieur Plessis had gone to Havre, for Madame de Coulancourt's letter had not yet arrived, though many days after the expected time, and Jean Plessis became uneasy. Our hero was not, because he was fairly, irrevocably in love, a love that absorbed his whole thoughts and actions, and he no longer talked of making his escape. The glory of naval achievements, once his pride and only thought, faded like rose leaves, and were wafted away, as cupid shook his tiny pinions over his victim encircling him with his invisible but most secure meshes.

Shall we attempt to probe the heart of the fascinating and lively Marie de Tourville. Had she become aware of her lover's devotion? We only ask our fair readers, did they ever mistake a man's love when declared by his eyes, his actions, by anything but words? Did they ever mistake that devotion for friendship?

All we can say is, Marie de Tourville was not

blind; she knew that she was loved, and she gloried in it, though it seemed a strange contradiction for one so sweetly modest and retiring, to declare to her friend, that the dearest object of her life was obtained when she gained the love of William Thornton. Neither did this declaration shock the pretty Julia, who laughed as she kissed the crimsoned cheek of the beautiful girl, saying:

"You see, dearest, that for once, your giddy friend prophesied rightly; and in overcoming your timid reluctance, she may have aided to ensure your future happiness."

In this instance Cupid played no game of cross purposes. If Lieutenant Thornton fondly loved, he was no lover in vain, for the gentle heart of Marie de Tourville beat in unison with his.

It was a lovely day in June, the one chosen for the excursion; and, though it is hotter in Normandy during that month than with us, who are sometimes content to warm ourselves with a good fire, when June, as master Punch says, sets in with its usual severity; yet the heat was

tempered by a delicious, fresh westerly wind, and a succession of light gossamer clouds that somewhat softened the glowing hue of a Norman sky, which, though not of the glorious colour of the Italian firmament, is yet intensely blue when compared with the canopy heaven spreads over the bright green fields of merry England.

Bill Saunders followed the young people at a little distance, carrying a basket, containing some light refreshment to be partaken of in the grotto. Bill had grown very philosophical; he found the life he led an easy one, rather too much so, for he would willingly have exerted his tongue more than he did, but he made poor progress in the language, though the females of the establishment, who liked the good-tempered and very good-looking seaman, took considerable pains to teach him. However, Bill smoked his pipe in the yard, helped the old gardener in his rough work, and as the old man had been deaf and dumb for the last two years of his life, they got on remarkably well; that is, they both made signs and nodded their heads, and remained quite satisfied

as if they each understood the other. Bill had instructions from his master, as he would style Lieutenant Thornton, that if ever he came in the way of a stranger, to pretend he was deaf and dumb, and hitherto he had managed to act his part well; but this day his discretion was to be put to a severer test.

Our hero and his fair companions, rambled on through the very pretty country surrounding the chateau, conversing on various and numerous subjects. Sometimes he would climb a rock to gather some wild flower, to give to Mademoiselle de Tourville, and receive in return a smile and a glance of pleasure from her large dark eyes, that strangely confused his brain.

"You remind me, in some respects," he once remarked, "of little Mabel Coulancourt; so much so, that I get quite bewildered with the resemblance; it is in the eyes, I fancy."

"But why, Monsieur Thornton," said Julia Plessis, laughing, "do you always call Mademoiselle Coulancourt 'little Mabel?' surely she is not a dwarf."

Marie de Tourville looked with a peculiar smile into the lieutenant's eyes.

"Dwarf," he repeated, "oh, no; I daresay she may now be a tall elegant girl. But somehow she always appears before my eyes as the dear, engaging, tender-hearted child, with her thin, pale face, so expressive of all the sufferings she had gone through; and then the pleading look of her large lustrous eyes. I would have sacrificed my boyish life for her; and God knows I would do so now, as for a fondly loved sister."

The lieutenant looked up as he spoke, and Marie de Tourville turned aside her head as if gazing round her; he fancied that her eyes filled with tears.

"This is very strange," thought our hero, "I have observed this emotion before; indeed, it is always obvious whenever we speak of Mabel Coulancourt."

"It is a great pity, Monsieur Thornton," observed Julia Plessis, with a very demure and serious look, "that you have not been faithful

to your fair protegée; instead of loving her as a sister, you ought to have given and kept for her your fondest affection—the affection of a lover."

"You forget, fair Julia," replied our hero, somewhat seriously, "that when we parted Mabel was but a child. What might have been my feelings in after years, had circumstances thrown us together, who can say? The human heart is a strange piece of mechanism; we can with difficulty control or command its impulses."

"And yet," said Marie de Tourville, in a low and somewhat agitated voice, "gratitude has a strange power over woman's heart; who can say but that the child you describe as so precocious and sensitive, may not have grown into womanhood with a deep and overpowering feeling gradually increasing with increased sensibility, till that one feeling has become the engrossing one of her whole heart, staking her happiness on earth on its being returned?"

William Thornton started, and a flush rose to his cheek as he sought to gaze into the expres-

sive features of his companion, whose eyes sought the ground. He felt uneasy, he knew not why, till Julia with a light merry laugh, said gaily:

"Come, we have had quite enough of Master Cupid, and his supposed capabilities of making people miserable or happy as the case may be. I know for my part the little wretch shall take the bandage off his own eyes before he blinds mine, for I verily declare I consider all people in love nothing more than a set of poor deluded mortals—moths about a flame. Now turn, both of you and look at this view, there's the grotto and the rocks of Menin; and there, about two miles off, on that high bank with the noble forest behind it, stands the chateau of the Monsieur or Captain Gramont, my father was speaking about the other day."

"I had no idea of seeing any spot half so picturesque and lovely," cried Marie, rousing from the reverie she seemed plunged in; and gazing into the Lieutenant's face with such a look of confiding affection, that had they been alone he would have thrown himself at her feet, and

avowed that love so plainly shown by every look and action; that devotion, which, no matter whether alone or in the presence of Madame Plessis and her daughter, he made no effort to conceal. He had been told she was an orphan, and going to England with the intention of trusting to her talents for support. Then what was to hinder him from loving her and throwing himself at her feet; his heart told him she would not scorn his affection, every difficulty therefore vanished. Where is the difficulty that will not disappear before a lover, satisfied of his fair one's faith and truth.

The scenery would have been unnoticed but for Julia's call on his attention. Politeness compelled him to rouse himself, and looking around he declared that Julia's previous description—a description that had called up his wish to view the Hermit's Grotto—was exceeded by the reality. It certainly was a glowing and charming picture. The path on which they were standing was apparently intercepted by a range of extremely picturesque rocks of immense

size, looking like detached masses piled one upon another. The recesses were covered with an infinite variety of parasite plants, mosses, and flowering shrubs, and the summits covered with groups of stunted pines. Through the heart of this singular barrier of rocks, nearly half a mile in length, the trout stream rushed with considerable violence, falling a height of above thirty feet, in one broad sheet, into a beautiful pool of deep pellucid water, more than a thousand feet in circumference. The stream then fell over a low range of rock, and pursued its course, tumbling and foaming over detached rocks, till it reached a level track running through some rich pasture meadows.

Close beside the pool, and seemingly scooped out of the rock, was the grotto, its sides covered with the luxuriant foliage of the wild fig, whilst from the top hung festoons of the flowery jessamine, which grew in wild profusion over the rocks.

"I do not wonder," said Lieutenant Thorn-

ton, "that the good hermit lived to a good old age in this charming spot."

"Do you think you could live here a quarter that period, Monsieur de Tourville?" enquired Julia laughing.

"Oh, yes, with a fair saint like yourself on the opposite side of the pool to give life and beauty to the scene."

"And to help to fry the trout you would catch in the said pool," returned the lively girl, trying to climb a rock for a beautiful wild rose.

Thornton and Marie de Tourville strolled into the grotto, leaving Julia collecting a wild nosegay, whilst Bill, having deposited the basket, scrambled up the rocks to see what was on the other side.

Marie de Tourville sat down on the stone bench hewn out of the rock, either by the pious hermit or some hermit loving disciple, and her companion placed himself beside her.

"If ever a hermit lived here," observed the

young girl looking around, "surely he must have had some other place of repose, than this open grotto; you see it is of no extent, and in winter the blasts up the valley must have been piercing."

"Depend on it, the holy father took care of himself," returned our hero; "at all events, if he lived here a hundred years he was blessed with a most excellent constitution."

"You seem to have no faith in the piety of monks and hermits," observed Marie with a smile.

"Not much, I confess," said our hero; "it requires to be a good Catholic to hear, see, and believe all we are told of their self denial."

"Yet, you may be mistaken; you are aware I was reared a Protestant. Still I do not see that we have any right to doubt the piety of others, trusting chiefly to our biassed history of their lives and doings."

"I would not argue the point with so dangerous and so fair an antagonist," said the lieutenant, "I would rather," he added, with a look

of devoted affection, "plead my own cause," and he laid his hand gently upon the fair and beautiful fingers that trembled at his touch, but not drawn away. "It is needless for me to say that with my whole heart and soul I love you, Marie, for you must have read my affection before now. A strange and incomprehensible feeling drew me towards you the very first moment that we met; I call it strange, because when I gaze into your features an inexplicable idea rushes through my brain, a confusion of thoughts impossible to disentangle. But one feeling however struggles through the mist, and that is, that I adore you and that to remain longer silent is impossible." The hand he held trembled exceedingly as he added, "beloved, my heart has dared to whisper that I am not wholly indifferent to you. One word, Marie, from your lips decides my fate."

He drew her gently towards him, and raising her eyes to his,—they were full of tears,—she said in a low sweet voice, and speaking to his utter amazement in English:

"Is it possible, William, you never recognized little Mabel."

The blood rushed to William Thornton's heart with overwhelming force, as with an uncontrolable emotion he caught her to his heart, exclaiming:

"My God! how grateful am I, the one painful feeling of my life is scattered to the winds. Oh, Mabel! Mabel! Can you still love me as I adore you?"

"Dear William, why doubt poor Mabel's love; how it has grcwn with my growth, it has been my pride and my joy that my happiness was centred in you."

"Ah! and yet," uttered the Lieutenant in a tone of bitter self reproach, "I apparently loved another."

"No, William, you loved Mabel. In the midst of your love for Marie, Mabel was flitting before your mind's eye, the pale, thin, careworn face of the child you protected was still struggling for a place in your heart—confess it."

"Mabel, you are an angel," and pressing her to his heart he fondly kissed her cheek.

A shadow crossed the grotto's mouth, and Julia Plessis entered laughing, saying:

"Well, upon my word, strange things do occur in this world. I left you, Monsieur, with a woman, and lo! I hear you say she's an angel; never after this doubt the holiness of the Hermit's Grotto."

Before another word could be said a darker shadow crossed the grotto's mouth, and caused the three absorbed inmates to start to their feet. The tall form of a man with a fishing rod in his hand and a basket at his back stood before them, and at a glance Lieutenant Thornton recognized Captain Gramont.

Raising his hat from his head the Frenchman bowed with the utmost courtesy, saying:

"Pardon me, ladies, and you Monsieur de Tourville, for this intrusion; it was quite unintentional. I was crossing the rocks towards the stream on the other side to try and tempt a large

trout out of this famous pool, when I encountered a rather strange individual. I spoke to him, but he looked at me as if I were a wild beast, shook his head and made a horrid noise in his throat."

"Ah!" interrupted our hero inclined to laugh, though exceedingly annoyed at the interruption, "you met my man, Pierre Bompart; he is deaf and dumb, but as faithful a fellow as ever lived."

There was a curl on Monsieur Gramont's lip as he bowed, and as all left the grotto, he observed:—

"I have no doubt of his fidelity, for he seemed decidedly inclined to throw me over the rocks, and I really did not offend him. But I have to beg your pardon, Monsieur de Tourville, for not having called at Coulancourt. I have been absent. The Government has made me Maire of this Arrondissement, and I had to proceed to Rouen; but I had intended doing myself that honour to-morrow."

Our hero bowed, and as he could do no less, and politeness required it, he introduced the two ladies to the unwelcome intruder.

Monsieur Gramont could scarcely conceal his admiration as he acknowledged the introduction to Mademoiselle de Tourville, but to Mademoiselle Plessis he said in a gay tone:—

"Though I have not had the pleasure of an introduction before, I have had the happiness of seeing Mademoiselle Plessis."

"The happiness was entirely confined to yourself, Monsieur," said Julia, carelessly, "for I really never remember having anywhere seen you."

"I could recall the period, nevertheless, Mademoiselle, but it is a painful time to bring back to your memory; you were a very young girl."

Julia did look surprised, and a little uneasy, and perhaps curious, for she said:—

"Pray to what time do you refer, Monsieur? You know our sex are always accounted curious, so I suppose I am like all the rest."

"If all were like you, Mademoiselle," said Monsieur Gramont, with a flattering smile, "this would be a dangerous world for our sex; but the

period I refer to was shortly after the taking of Lyons, when Collet d'Herbois, Fouché, and Montait had formed a military commission there."

"Ah! Mon Dieu!" exclaimed Julia Plessis, with a start of horror.

And Mabel's cheek turned deadly pale, whilst Lieutenant Thornton gazed with a frown on his brow at the unconcerned features of the Frenchman.

"Mon Dieu! were you there with those wretches?"

"I was a lieutenant in the chasseurs, Mademoiselle, and doing my duty under the orders of General Ronsin. I had no share in the horrors there committed; those men have since received a merited doom for their atrocities; but I was struck at the time, Mademoiselle, by the noble devotion of your father and family in the cause of the beautiful and then unfortunate Duchess de Coulancourt."

Mabel felt intensely uneasy, for as she raised her eyes, she thought or she fancied, the eyes of

Monsieur Gramont rested upon her with a peculiar look. In a low voice she said to Lieutenant Thornton:—

"Let us go back to the chateau."

"Well, Monsieur Gramont," cried our hero, "we will not interrupt you in your sport; there are some clouds overhead, and a fine breeze curls the surface of yonder deep pool, both prognostics in your favour."

The two maidens saluted the Frenchman, who remained uncovered until they turned to depart, and then he said:—

"Since I have been so fortunate in making such agreeable and charming acquaintance, I will eagerly avail myself of my good fortune."

The party then began retracing their steps, and Bill, from his station, seeing them retiring, rose up; he was quietly smoking his pipe, eyeing all the movements of Monsieur Gramont, for whom he had imbibed a most inconceivable dislike, from the very first day of their meeting, and hearing his master say, "He did not like that Monsieur Gramont," Bill doubly disliked him.

He, however, had no dislike for the French women; the men, he declared, were born his natural enemies, and the only one he was likely to be reconciled to was the old deaf gardener; but Monsieur Gramont was a tall, handsome man, with whom he felt a monstrous desire to pick a quarrel. The party going away without refreshment, and in which he considered he would have shared after they had finished, was caused by Monsieur Gramont's intrusion, and this made Bill grumble.

He was descending the rocks, and was passing the Frenchman to get his basket, when Monsieur Gramont, unfolding his rod and landing net, turned suddenly round, and looking into Bill's honest face, said, pointing to the net:—

"Hold this a moment, my man, and I'll thank you."

Bill started back as if a thirty-two pound shot had made an attempt to pass between his legs, for the Frenchman spoke in unmistakeable English. Bill was taken aback, and he at once replied:—

"I'll see you —— first."

But immediately recollecting his dumb character, and seeing his master waving his hand for him to come on, he glared at the cool, and collected, and smiling Frenchman, and uttered such a succession of unearthly sounds, that any one else would have been confounded; and then, with a look of unmistakable rage, at Monsieur Gramont, he seized his basket, clenched his huge fist, and departed, whilst the Frenchman kept quietly putting his rod together, singing "Malbrook," and other French airs.

"Well, blow me," muttered Bill, "if I would'nt give twelve months' pay to thrust my fist into that crapaud's mouth. I'd spoil the beauty of his Moll Brook, the cursed frog-eating lubber; speaking English too, thinking to take me in. Aye, aye; sink me if it is not enough to capsize a fellow under bare poles."

Thus grumbling and growling, and rather afraid his master would think he had not acted his part well, and on reflecting, deeply regretting

that he had not thrown Frenchman, rod and all, into the pool, he hurried on after the party.

As our hero and his fair companions proceeded towards the chateau, the conversation naturally turned upon the discovery which had just been made of Marie de Tourville being no other than Mabel Arden.

"And is it possible, Monsieur," said Julia Plessis, "that your heart never suggested the idea that Marie and Mabel were one and the same person? Was there no trace of the thin, pale girl left in the sweet face of my beloved friend to recall the past?"

"Yes," replied the young man, gazing with fond delight upon the beautiful and happy girl who leaned upon his arm so confidingly. "Yes, the child's image constantly haunted me; sleeping or waking the two faces appeared before me. It seemed to me as if I was loving both; I was most completely bewildered. Still, I really never for a moment thought it possible they could be one and the same; that idea never entered my head at

all. It is true Marie's eyes always reminded me of Mabel's, and I often in fancy pictured to myself my little protegée grown into just such another loveable being as Marie, and I continually tormented myself as to whether Mabel would ever remember me as anything but a brother if I had kept my affections free."

"Ah, the fact is, I was always quite right," said Julia, laughing; "love is blind, and lovers infatuated."

"But your time will come, fair Julia," suggested the Lieutenant.

"Eh, bien!" returned the lovely girl. "I will then beseech the saints to grant me patience, strengthen my digestion, and make me love a rational creature. But, badinage apart, I can't endure that Monsieur Gramont; he says he had no share in the horrors committed at Lyons. do not believe him; he belonged to the army of the ferocious Ronsin, and that's enough to stamp his character in my mind. I wonder he had the face to acknowledge he was one of the monsters that so disgraced God's own image."

"Like you, Julia," said Mabel with a shudder, "I feel a kind of apprehension steal over me when I think of that man; indeed, I thought he looked at me with a strange inquiring expression. However, after all it was perhaps mere fancy on my part."

"Now, dearest," interrupted our hero, addressing Mabel, "pray explain to me the singular and extraordinary circumstance of your being here, when I thought you were far away in Old England. It appears so unaccountable."

"And yet," returned Mabel, "most easily explained, and will appear very simple and natural when you hear my explanation. From the moment I became aware that my beloved mother was alive and well and residing in Paris, an overpowering desire to fly to her arms took possession of me; I could not rest night or day—I could think of nothing else. Amongst the French refugees, acquaintances of Madame Volney's, was a Madame De Tourville, whose family consisted of a son and daughter; their resources were very

limited, and just at this time they received letters from an uncle, who was in power and high in the French Directory. He urged their return to France, *viâ* Hamburgh, with every hope of some of their estates being restored, on their taking the oath not to emigrate.

"They immediately resolved to return to their country. Madame Volney knowing my intense desire to rejoin my parents, and participating in the feeling, and also knowing how necessary it was that I should procure proofs of my birth, and my mother's marriage, easily prevailed on Madame De Tourville to take me with her, as her daughter's French attendant, her late one had refused to go back to France. Accordingly we embarked for Hamburgh, and the necessary papers being sent us by Madame De Tourville's uncle, we travelled safely to Paris.

"Need I describe the joy and rapture of my beloved mother. I will pass over many things now for the sake of brevity. It was necessary that I should continue to represent Janette Brusset, the attendant of Madame Tourville, so

I remained with Madame Plessis and my dear Julia, the beloved companion of my childhood, visiting my dear and still beautiful mother daily, and occasionally staying several days and nights as if in attendance on her. My mother's ardent, burning desire is to get from France, and return to her own country.

"When I explained to her that my uncle had left me so noble a fortune, and that you were her brother's son, she told me she had heard all that, and that Jean Plessis was even then seeking the necessary documents to establish her marriage and my poor lamented brother Julian's birth. Afterwards came your letter, enclosed in one from good Dame Moret's son to Jean Plessis, who had just returned. Imagine our joy though still our anxiety.

"Then it was that Julia proposed that I should accompany her and her father and mother to Coulancourt, as Mademoiselle De Tourville. Ah, William,—I still call you William—" Our hero pressed the little hand resting on his arm. "I was easily persuaded to practice this ruse upon

you, to see if you still remembered the 'little pale thin child' that clung to you years back, as her only hope; and so good Monsieur Plessis, who had an eye to your escape out of France, and to guard you from imprisonment, whilst in it, by bribery, procured papers for Monsieur Phillip and Mademoiselle Marie De Tourville, so that if you attracted notice you might pass for my brother; after arranging this plan, it struck my mother that she might also get out of France, but Jean Plessis over persuaded her for the present, as it might prove our destruction, and at one sweep confiscate all her property. My dear mother cared not for the estates, she so longed to quit France; but then she knew she might involve good Monsieur Plessis, whose attachment and noble generosity had caused him so often to risk his life for her and her late husband, so she consented to my coming here. 'And perhaps,' suggested Monsieur Plessis, 'by a little manœuvring you may, Madame, be able to visit Coulancourt yourself.' This idea delighted my mother for she longs to see and embrace you.

"So now, dear William, it is I that have to ask your pardon for thinking to steal your heart from little Mabel."

Young hearts—young hearts—how few and simple are the words from the lips beloved that constitute the felicity. We know not the delights in the years that follow.

As they approached the chateau, walking up from the bottom of the lawn, they beheld Rose Moret running from the front door to meet them.

"What can cause Rose to hurry so?" exclaimed Mabel, we will drop her assumed name; but Rose was up with them before they could surmise, or utter a conjecture. She looked like a full-blown peony, her cheeks were so flushed.

"Why, Rose, you are out of breath," said Julia; "anything wrong?"

"Well, indeed, Mademoiselle, perhaps what I have to tell you may not be pleasant; but mother told me to run and take the short cut, and to tell you that Sergeant François Perrin and

another gendarme are coming to the chateau on a visit of inspection; but do not be alarmed for it is only a matter of form."

Mabel at first turned pale, and clung with a feeling of alarm to her companion, but Julia Plessis reassured her by saying:

"Do not trouble about Sergeant Perrin; we are old acquaintances. I can very easily manage him, so trust to me."

Rose then turned to Lieutenant Thornton, saying:—

"Monsieur, there is a young man, a sailor, apparently, he says his name is Louis Lebeau; waiting for you under the great chesnut tree at the back of the garden."

"Louis Lebeau," repeated our hero, "I never heard the name before, to the best of my recollection; but pray, Rose, say I will join him there in a few minutes. I wish to speak to Saunders, for he had better keep out of the way, provided the Sergeant does not inquire after him."

"Do you think there is anything to fear from

this visit, William?" asked Mabel anxiously, looking into her lover's face.

"No, Mabel, I do not think there is the slightest cause for apprehension; these kind of visits are common in France; a mere ceremony that must be gone through. Monsieur Plessis has had our papers so carefully prepared, that suspicion cannot be excited."

By this time they had reached the house, and whilst the females went in, the young man turned back to have a word with Bill.

"I trust, Bill, you did not utter a syllable when that Frenchman spoke to you on the rocks."

"Not one," replied Bill; "I gave a kind of grunt, like a well-bred porker, when he feels the knife in him, and then Mounseer stared at me, as if I was a whale or a porpoise sporting over land, and says he, 'Parley voo, garron;' by my conscience I had a mind to give him a flip in the head, for calling me a garron."

"He did not call you a garron, he, no doubt said garçon."

"Well, sir, they are much the same, seeing I don't know what that word is."

Then Bill hesitated a little; then looking up, and rubbing the back of his head, he continued:—

"He speaks English, your honour."

"Speaks English!" repeated our hero with a start. "How can you know that? you surely must have spoken to him."

Bill looked puzzled; he, however, said:—

"No, your honour, I didn't speak to him. I was passing him by, you see, when he turns round, and says he, curse his impudence, 'hold that, my man, and I'll thank you.' 'See you —— first,' says I."

"What!" exclaimed the Lieutenant, angrily, "you said that!"

"Not exactly," said Bill, fidgetting; "in course I meant it. I turns round, fills, and goes ahead; the mounseer begins singing about some Moll Brook, and some other gibberish, and says I, 'I'll Moll Brook you, if I had ten minutes play with you,' and so, your honour, I left him."

"Well," said Lieutenant Thornton, thoughtfully, "this is serious. However, what's done cannot be undone; you acted as well as I could expect: but now hear me, you had better keep out of the way; there are two gendarmes coming here, to make the usual examination of the papers of all strangers; so keep to your room unless I send for you."

Thus speaking, the Lieutenant walked on, making a circuit of the house to enable him to reach the great chestnut tree at the back.

"Well, blow me, if this ain't a nice country to live in. Coming to look at our papers!" muttered Bill, "I wish we had the two lubbers on board the little 'Onyx,' my eyes, wouldn't I paper them; howsomever, I will take this basket to my room, I suppose I'm not expected to fast because those beggars are coming."

Bill very quietly made his way to his room, shut the door, bolted it, and then began to examine the contents of the basket. In the meantime, our hero was by no means easy in his mind respecting Bill's rencontre with Monsieur Gra-

mont; for on reflection it convinced him of two things—first, that the Frenchman doubted Bill's being deaf and dumb; and secondly, he must have suspected him to be an Englishman. This train of reflection made him exceedingly uncomfortable; he had now not only his own safety to attend to, but the safety of one dearer to him than life.

He was roused from his uncomfortable thoughts by seeing the great chesnut tree before him, a tree considered almost sacred by the peasantry, from its great age, and several remarkable historical events connected with it; but as those events belong to the traditionary history of Normandy, we will not interrupt the thread of our story by reciting them.

On looking under the spreading branches, he perceived a young man in a sailor's dress leaning against the huge trunk, but who immediately advanced towards him. Our hero looked at him with some surprise, for although vested in the attire of the French common sailor, there was an air of easy grace, and a gentlemanly

bearing, that was noticeable at first sight. As the stranger halted close beside the Lieutenant, there was a visible flush on his cheek as he said:

"It will not do to waste words—Sir Oscar de Bracy."

The Lieutenant started and gazed somewhat curiously into the features of the stranger, which appeared almost familiar to him, and being addressed in English, his surprise was the greater.

"No doubt you are astonished," continued the false Lebeau, "but I had better inform you who I am at once—I am Julian Arden."

"Heavens! is this possible?" exclaimed the astonished listener, grasping the speaker's hand. "You Julian Arden, the lost and deeply-lamented brother of Mabel!"

"Such in truth is the case," returned Julian, warmly pressing the hand that held his.

"I have no doubt of it," interrupted the amazed Lieutenant, "your features so resemble your sister's; but, in the name of fate how knew you me, or that I was here? There is joyful

news in store for you, your mother and sister both live."

"Yes, yes," returned the young man, "I know all that, and more than you imagine; perhaps, I have news, also, for you."

"Still, Julian," said Lieutenant Thornton, addressing him as he would a brother, "you cannot surely know that Mabel is here, in the old chateau."

"Ah, that is news, indeed," joyfully exclaimed Julian Arden, "and amply repays the years of privation, and at times sufferings, that I have endured. I was aware of my beloved mother being alive and well, and in Paris; but Mabel I thought was in England, her being here amazes me. Aware that she owes her preservation and future happiness to your care and noble generosity, I longed to see you before I proceeded to seek my mother."

"Had we not better proceed to the house," said William Thornton; "we have so much to explain and to say; but I will first break this joyful intelligence to Mabel."

"No," said Julian, "I dare not venture there till night, after the visit of François Perrin, and the inspecting gendarmes. In my joy at meeting you, I have delayed speaking of him; I was with Dame Moret when he came to her house, stating he was going to visit the chateau, and as she had informed me that you were here, she wished you to be put upon your guard. Rose Moret went on before me, so now you had better go back to the house. I will return to Dame Moret till dark, and then come here, and you can hide me for a few days, till we are enabled to talk over our position and future proceedings; after which I intend journeying to Paris. I have papers as Louis Lebeau, of Rouen, and can more readily than any Englishman pass for a French sailor, as you will be able to judge when you hear my story."

Rose Moret interrupted their further conversation, by hurrying towards them. "The gendarmes are come, Monsieur, and Mademoiselle Plessis is anxious you should see them; it will

remove all suspicion, though she does not think they have any."

"Very good," said Lieutenant Thornton, "I will see them; but, Rose, you must contrive to keep Pierre Bompart out of the way."

"There's no fear of him, Monsieur," returned Rose, laughing. "He has taken the basket with the lunch to his room, and locked himself in, grumbling a good deal, but really I have no idea about what, as there is enough in the basket to keep him a week."

"He is only lamenting, Rose, that he cannot knock the heads of the two gendarmes together; an amusement that would please him amazingly. Farewell, Julian; I shall most anxiously expect you, and you may be sure, there is one that will be in a state of intense anxiety till she sees you."

"Farewell till to night," replied Julian, "but for heaven's sake be cautious with those men, though Dame Moret said you spoke French very nearly like a native of the country, but of

another province; and as the De Tourvilles were from Picardy, mind that, you will do very well."

So shaking hands the young men, who already felt highly pleased with each other, parted.

CHAPTER II.

We must now follow the footsteps of Monsieur Gramont, who, having finished singing his air of "Malbrook," put up his fishing rod, gave a look after the retreating form of Bill Saunders, and burst into a self-satisfied laugh.

"So," said he to himself, "that big brute thinks he has deceived me, and that I am such a fool as to think him deaf and dumb. I knew he was an Englishman as well as his master. Parbleu! I will have them all in a trap in a little while, and though the guillotine has gone out of fashion, I can still get them comfortable

lodgings, and accomplish my projects at the same time. By the bye that girl is marvellously lovely—Mademoiselle De Tourville! Why he, an English naval officer, should pass for her brother is something curious. Take care, Monsieur Plessis, take care, you may be getting your head into an awkward place some of these days with all your astuteness."

Having fastened his rod together, he commenced crossing the rocks (through which the river found a passage) by a sort of path used by the country people. Having arrived at the other side where the river disappeared, and where a good bridle road led along the side of the stream to a stone bridge, about half a mile distant, he applied a whistle to his lips, and immediately a man, leading two saddle horses, came out from the thick plantation bordering one side of the road.

"Oh," mentally exclaimed Monsieur Gramont, "he had patience to wait, though I told him I might not return this way at all," and then he descended to the road.

The man holding the two horses was a somewhat remarkable looking personage. In years he was rather over, than under, fifty, with a thick grizzled beard, immense bushy eyebrows, with small deep sunk grey eyes, having a most sinister if not ferocious expression. He was of middle height, rather short than otherwise, and as he walked forward on the road he jerked his shoulders up and down in a most peculiar manner. He was attired similarly to Monsieur Gramont, only instead of a cap he wore a hat, pushed well down on his forehead.

"You had the patience to wait the chance of my return, Augustine," said Monsieur Gramont, as he joined the man holding the horse.

"Ma foi, oui," said the person named Augustine, in a gruff, harsh voice, "I might as well ruminate here two or three hours as do so at the Chateau; so as I thought it possible you might return, I waited. Did you see them?

"I did," said Monsieur Gramont, "but I saw that my presence was anything but welcome, so I let them return to Coulancourt, without forcing

my company on them; but let us mount, we can talk as we ride."

Having mounted they rode on at a slow pace towards the bridge.

"Had you any opportunity of testing my opinion respecting that Monsieur De Tourville? He is no more a Frenchman than I am a Dutchman," questioned Monsieur Gramont's companion.

"I am quite satisfied he is an Englishman," returned Monsieur Gramont, "and so is that big fellow that wants to pass for a dummy. I tried the fellow with a sentence of English, holding my landing net to him, and he started back as if something had exploded under his nose; he looked as if he could have swallowed me."

"Curse him and his master to boot. If they had not been in the way, we should have performed our job in first rate style, and got possession of all those papers. Besides, that ruffian when he put the landing net over my head, pulled it back with such tremendous force against my throat, that I doubt if ever I shall recover

the power of swallowing; every time I eat it jolts my whole body, and gives me great pain. I'll cut his windpipe for that yet."

"He certainly made a very ingenious weapon of his landing net. I was watching the whole proceeding from the thicket on the river's bank, and must say they managed to kill two of your comrades and make the rest take to flight in a masterly manner. The master is a very powerful young man."

"Nevertheless," returned the man named Augustine, savagely, "I should have had my knife in his heart, but for that villain with the landing net. Curse him, he kicked me over afterwards, saying something in a strange language, which I afterwards recollected must be English. Why the fellow let me go I cannot imagine."

"Neither can I," replied De Gramont, "when I saw you run off, I turned back to the river, and picked up the stranger's fishing rod, and caught a fine trout, which was taking the world easy under the bank with a red hackle in his gills.

I bagged several others, waiting till the owner came back for his rod, hoping to pick some kind of intelligence out of him in order to discover what he thought of the attack upon Monsieur Plessis and family, but that beautiful girl getting away and uttering the shriek she did ruined all—it reached the stranger's ears."

"That was a bungling affair of one of the men," said Augustine, "she sprang out of the carriage at the opposite door, and would have got off into the wood, only I sent Jacques after her; the Englishman then came up and ran him through the body, though Jacques fired his pistol full in his face."

"Well, it's no use our talking this matter over again; the project failed and there's an end of it. The only thing to be feared was Jean Plessis being able to discover any of the robbers, as they were considered; but to my surprise, he appeared very glad to hush up the affair, and let it be thought that the fellows were a remnant of the Chouans band, that committed so many outrages here two years ago; and the terribly

disturbed state of all the roads and districts of France at this moment with brigands and robbers of all kinds, caused the affair to be thought lightly of, and no search, except by the peasantry, was made after the fugitives "

"No fear of their tracing them," said Augustine, "my comrades understood, if the thing failed, they were to make their way into Brittany as fast as they could, so I had no apprehension on that account. I confess I thought it was all up when that villain of an Englishman had me in his grasp—as well try and get out of a vice. But why not at once denounce them as spies, and get them arrested and sent to Paris."

"No," returned Monsieur Gramont, "you are very short-sighted; you do not see the game I am playing. What good would it do me to lodge those two Englishmen in prison, and get Jean Plessis suspected? Would that pay off the mortgages on my property, regain me Coulancourt, or enable you to set up for yourself in another country? I have agreed to give you a certain sum, and get you safe out of France, for I

tell you your party and Robespierre's are crushed for ever. People are sick of blood, and jacobinism is at a fearful discount. Your throat would be cut with frantic joy if you were caught in Paris. The reaction was immediate and overpowering; the name of a jacobin is held in abhorrence. Your famous associates, Fouguier, Rimaud, and Carrier, died amidst the howlings and shrieks of a multitude; all they wanted was yourself to make up a handsome quartette."

"You are cursed pleasant in your recollections," growled Augustine. "You seem to forget that it was I who forged the papers and accusations that got your father the estate of Coulancourt."

"Oh dear, no," returned Monsieur Gramont, laughing. "My memory is very good. I had nothing to do in that affair at all; I was never a jacobin. I really cannot say I delight in those extremes. If I can accomplish my ends without blood it is far preferable. You see the escape of the ci-devant Duchess de Coulancourt through the agency of Jean Plessis, and her re-appear-

ance in Paris, and fortunate trial just after the fall of Robespierre, when a violent re-action was taking place, lost me the property. Now I want to regain the estate at all events, which, having once possessed, I consider justly to be mine; but I do not want to get Madame Coulancourt's head off. If I prove that she is corresponding with England, where her daughter is, and that she and Jean Plessis, are seeking to secretly dispose of her property and transport the produce to Hamburgh, I shall gain my ends. I have my spies on her continually, and lately I have reason to suspect that a young girl said to be very beautiful, and who is constantly visiting her, whom she has been seen to embrace with much affection, is her daughter, smuggled into France some way or other. My next letters from Paris will be important."

There was a short silence, after which Monsieur Gramont's companion said:

"Are you certain that this very beautiful girl with Jean Plessis, calling herself Tourville, is really a Mademoiselle Tourville, and this Eng-

lishman passing for her brother is not her lover?"

"Of that I am quite certain; I saw and heard enough when I came suddenly upon them in the hermit's grotto. Lovers they are, but as to her being Mademoiselle Tourville or not I cannot say. I have ordered François Perrin to proceed to the chateau and make a visit of inspection without hinting any suspicion. He will be with me to-night to report."

"Well, it strikes me," said Augustine, "that this Mademoiselle De Tourville is Madame Coulancourt's daughter sent from Paris, fearing she might be suspected."

Monsieur Gramont looked at his companion, saying:

"You have been receiving private communications from Paris, during your absence?"

"I have, and desperate as you think the cause of the jacobins, I have another idea."

"And who is your correspondent?" demanded Monsieur Gramont, somewhat authoritatively.

"A man who will soon revive the power of the terrorists (another name for jacobins)—Babouf, who is now styled the tribune of the people; he will restore the 'true, pure, and absolute democracy.'"

"Bah!" muttered Monsieur Gramont. "I tell you what, Augustine Vadier, you will bring your head under the axe; to believe or think that a rascally scribbler of a paltry paper, who reproduces the discarded theories of that little villain Muret, will again overturn the present consolidated form of government, under which our armies are achieving the most triumphant success! Bah! It is the army that will govern by and by."

"By heaven, I do believe you are no better than an aristocrat at heart—a loyalist!" said Augustine Vadier savagely.

"No doubt in the world of it," returned Monsieur Gramont, quite coolly, "and always was; your republican principles and your ideas of liberty are all fudge. However, here we are, drop your political career, or you will lose your head.

I never, out of all those I have seen, ever knew a man's carcase worth a *sous* without a head. So keep yours, follow my counsel, and I'll stick to my bargain, though you botched the beginning."

So saying Monsieur Gramont rode into the court-yard at the back of his chateau, an edifice of considerable importance at one time, but at this period greatly out of repair, and sadly neglected. A domestic came to take the horses, and then Augustine Vadier followed Monsieur Gramont into the house, looking both gloomy and discontented.

Our readers will recollect that in one of the chapters of the second volume—the tenth, we think—we mentioned that Jean Plessis stated to our hero that he firmly believed that the casket Madame Coulancourt confided to his care was plundered of its contents by a galley slave named Augustine Vadier, who afterwards played a very conspicuous part among the monsters of the revolution.

That Augustine Vadier and the Augustine

Vadier above mentioned are one and the same person, and it will be now necessary to lay before our readers an account of his connection with Monsieur Gramont.

Being committed to the galleys for his crimes he was one of the two convicts left on board the hulk where our hero and Mabel passed so many hours after escaping from the mob in the streets of Toulon. Augustine Vadier was in communication with the other slaves, and with some of the most vicious of the Toulon Republicans, and their emancipation was hourly expected. This man perceived the extreme care William Thornton bestowed upon the parcel he carried under his arm, and saw him deposit it at the foot of the berth in which Mabel reposed. His first intention was to possess himself of it altogether, but as he could not get out of the dock till the insurrection emancipated himself and companions, he resolved to have a look at it, and, watching his opportunity, he extracted the casket from the berth, and getting into a remote part of the hulk took off the cover. What was his astonish-

ment when he recognised the casket itself as one sold by him several years back to the Duchess de Coulancourt, and quite aware of its construction, in ten minutes, with a thin saw made from a watch spring, and one or two other tools he had hidden, he took out the bottom, and all the contents, devouring with greedy eyes the valuable jewels and money it contained. Cutting up some pieces of lead he wrapped them in brown paper, and filling the spaces of the casket with shavings he restored the bottom, and putting the cover on, replaced it in the berth. Augustine Vadier's first impulse was to destroy the papers, but on looking at them he saw reason to think they might be of value hereafter.

On the galley slaves regaining their freedom, Vadier removed his plunder, and as he gained a position amongst the monsters brought into existence by the times, he placed the papers in greater security. Excelling in ingenuity, devilish in temper and disposition, he soon made himself notorious, and having the command of money from the sale of his jewels and gold, he soon be-

came closely associated with the leaders of the jacobin mob. Amongst the most violent and arrogant leaders of the party he joined was the elder Gramont, a man of high family but poor and eager for aggrandizement, who thought to gain his ends by siding with the ferocious and blood-thirsty followers of Marat, and afterwards with Robespierre.

Gramont and Vadier became amazingly friendly. In the course of time Gramont stated that he was connected by ties of blood with the ci-devant Duke de Coulancourt, that he aimed at getting into his hands the estates confiscated, and that if Vadier, who was a most accomplished forger, would aid him, he would make it well worth his while, and enrich him; for Vadier's extravagance equalled his love of blood. Struck with this proposal Vadier recollected the papers he had secreted in Toulon, and for them he went. Between them they forged several letters and a deed, purporting to annul the will the Duke made, leaving his property to his Duchess. In such a time of anarchy, con-

fusion, and horror, they contrived to gain their ends, and the confiscated property of the Coulancourts was bestowed upon Monsieur Gramont; but the overthrow of Robespierre and his execution, and the destruction of all his partizans that could be caught, some time after, put Monsieur Gramont and Augustine Vadier to flight. Vadier was so execrated that he dared not shew himself anywhere near Paris; he contrived to get into Brittany and joined the brigands, as they were then styled. A party he belonged to were forced to fly into Normandy; there he heard of Monsieur Gramont's son being still in possession of his father's property near Coulancourt, and as the son was well known to him, and knew of the manner in which he served his father, he discovered himself to him, and he gave him an asylum in his chateau. The pursuit after the partizans of Robespierre having relaxed, many had returned to Paris to foment fresh disturbances if they could; but Augustine Vadier, though he kept up a correspondence

with several persons in the capital, was yet afraid to shew himself.

Bertrand Gramont had just retired from the army, and through the interest of a near connection, then in power with the party governing France, was made Maire of the arrondissement in which Coulancourt was situated. He was immensely in debt, his only remaining estate being mortgaged to the last acre, and, in fact, he was living on the emoluments of his office. Totally unprincipled, caring not a straw about the political state of the country or minding much whether France became a republic or flourished under a monarchical government, though indeed he inclined to the latter, his only object was self aggrandizement, and his grand project to recover Coulancourt. Augustine Vadier had irrevocably lost the papers he once possessed, for in his flight from Paris he lost everything. Bertrand Gramont kept up a strict espionage upon Madame Coulancourt, his aim being to excite suspicion of her conduct, so that her estate

of Coulancourt might be confiscated, he being assured that if that event ever occurred he should be able to get reinstated in the property.

With Augustine Vadier he planned the robbery of Jean Plessis, thinking to gain possession of important papers relative to the estate, and also some evidence of the Intendant's proceedings respecting other property belonging to Madame Coulancourt.

Vadier brought into Normandy some eight or ten of his old associates, and kept them concealed till an opportunity should occur. Their vile projects were, however, defeated by the timely appearance of Lieutenant Thornton and Bill Saunders. Bertram Gramont was watching the whole proceeding, bitterly cursing the interference of our hero. In conversing with him afterwards respecting the fishing rod he had picked up, his suspicions were excited by something in the manner and appearance of Lieutenant Thornton; he found no fault exactly with his French, for he spoke the language exceedingly well; but

to a very keen observer like Bertram Gramont a trifle will lead to suspicion.

Suspicion once roused, caused reflection, and not knowing anyone in the vicinity of the name of De Tourville, he began making enquiries before he paid his promised visit to Coulancourt.

Vadier, who, at the time of the attack upon Jean Plessis, was without beard or whiskers, lay hid in Monsieur Gramont's chateau, till they grew, and he otherwise disguised himself. He declared to Bertram Gramont, that the man who nearly choked him with the landing net, was positively an Englishman, for he had spoken English to him. He was sure it was English.

Monsieur Gramont thought this was very curious, so he rode over to Havre, and there he heard the full particulars of the attempt upon the "Vengeance," and of her seizure afterwards by an English officer of the "Diamond" frigate, and one man, and their taking her to sea; of her being burned, and then run ashore near or under Lyon Point; but what became of the English officer and his man, no one could say. Strongly

desirous of finding some clue to the mystery, Bertram Gramont rode to the place where Captain Gaudet was repairing and refitting the "Vengeance." He saw Pierre Gaudet, and questioned him concerning the naval officer and his man that took the privateer.

Captain Gaudet readily enough told him all he knew, that it was the same officer who has shot his brother-in-law, and took the "Bonne-Citoyenne" schooner; but he could not say what became of him and his companion. He said very likely that they were drowned; but Monsieur Gramont thought that it was not probable. He made the captain describe the two men minutely, and from his description he felt almost satisfied that Monsieur de Tourville, and his servant, Pierre Bompart, were the English officer and his man. He at once set François Perrin, Sergeant of the Inspecting Gendarmes, to make all kind of inquiries, cautiously, so as not to excite suspicion. So well did the sergeant manage it, that he found out that two tall men, dressed as sailors, supposed to be French sailors, had crossed the sands

to the village of Caux, on the morning after the burning wreck came ashore, and had been observed to enter the village, but were not seen after. More the sergeant could not learn; however, that was enough for Bertram Gramont. Giving the sergeant a handsome present, he desired him to remain quiet for a while.

Bertram Gramont now felt satisfied he knew who Monsieur de Tourville was; but that by no means cleared up all the mystery of the affair to him. He was convinced there was a great deal more to be found out. He did not care about the arrest of the Englishmen; the finding them domiciled in Coulancourt, under the names of De Tourville and Bompart, was mysterious, but ten times more so, when a Mademoiselle de Tourville arrived. He set a careful spy upon the movements of the inhabitants of Coulancourt, and as a guide he ordered Sergeant Perrin to pay a visit to Dame Moret's, and also to the chateau, to excite no suspicion, but merely to perform his actual duty, enquiring the names, looking at their papers, &c., and then to come to him.

The spy brought him word that a party was going to the hermit's grotto on the following day, so with Vadier, now much transmogrified by beard and whiskers, and false eyebrows, he rode to the place, left Vadier with the horses, and crossed the rocks.

Our readers know the result; he learned enough to prove to him that Monsieur de Tourville was the lover, not the brother of the beautiful girl who bore the same name. On returning home that day, he sent off a messenger to Paris with a letter, and directions to bring back an answer; this done, he waited the arrival of Sergeant Perrin.

CHAPTER III.

After parting from Julian Arden by the chestnut tree, Lieutenant Thornton proceeded to the house, his mind fully occupied with the sudden and strange appearance of Julian, and the somewhat critical position which they were all in; liable every moment to be discovered and sent to a prison. It was vexatious also that Jean Plessis was absent, as he was thus left with the female part of the family, to stand the brunt of Sergeant François Perrin's examination.

On reaching the hall door he was met by Julia

Plessis; she did not appear at all uneasy, but handed him a pocket-book, saying:—

"I have left Sergeant Perrin fully occupied, over a bottle of Cognac, to which he is greatly attached; you will have time to proceed to your room, and run your eyes over the papers prepared for you, which are in that book. It is unlucky my father is away; but the sergeant does not appear to be at all inquisitive. Merely requesting to see you and your papers, and get you to write your name in his book."

"If we can avoid bringing Pierre Bompart before him," said our hero, "there will be no suspicion excited."

He then proceeded to his chamber, and read over the papers. He was described as Monsieur Phillip de Tourville, twenty-three years of age, and a native of Pontri and Picardy, with an attendant named Pierre Bompart, also a native of the same place; there was no description of person, &c., as became the case some years afterwards, the paper being a simple register of name, and signed by the Paris official, and required to be

read and signed by the Maire of the district. Marie de Tourville had a separate paper. Having read the short document, he descended to the sitting room, anxious to see Mabel, fearing she might be uneasy, and at the same time to break to her the joyful tidings of not only her brother's safety, but his being then actually at Dame Moret's.

On entering the room Mabel looked anxiously into his face, to judge if he felt alarmed; but he looked so cheerful, and made so light of the matter that her sweet features brightened, as he sat down by her side, saying:—

"I have intelligence, dear Mabel, that will gladden your heart."

Our heroine looked anxious, saying:—

"What have you heard, dear William, since I saw you. I learned from Rose that you were gone to speak to a sailor, calling himself Louis Lebeau. Did he bring you the good news you speak of? Do you know I thought Rose looked as if she had something to communicate, and yet refrained for some reason."

"Rose, I dare say," said the lieutenant, "wished me to impart a piece of intelligence that will fill your heart with joy."

"Can you mean, William," said Mabel eagerly, and her hand resting on that of her lover, "can you mean that you have heard any tidings of poor Julian?"

"Yes," said the lieutenant, kissing the fair hand resting on his; "yes, sure and certain news of his not only being alive and well, but of his arrival in France."

"Heaven be praised!" fervently exclaimed Mabel, the tears coming into her eyes, "what joy this will be to my beloved mother. Did this Louis Lebeau bring you this joyful intelligence?"

"He did, dearest."

And bending down his head, he whispered a few words in her ear.

With an uncontrollable feeling of deep emotion, Mabel threw her arms round her lover's neck, and laid her head upon his shoulder, weeping with excess of joy.

"William, William, what joy you have imparted to my heart; dear Julian so near me."

The door opened as she uttered the words, and Madame Plessis and Julia entered the room. They also had learned the news from Rose, for Julia, kissing her friend kindly, wished her joy of the happy intelligence.

"But now, dear Mabel, put on a grave or rather a careless face, for Sergeant Perrin is waiting for you both in the green room."

Mabel gave a slight shudder, but looking up with a smile, said:

"I am ready; I feel no fear, when with my good brother Philip," and putting her arm within Lieutenant Thornton's, they left the room, and proceeded to a chamber where Sergeant François Perrin awaited them, seated at a table on which stood a half-emptied decanter of Cognac, and some dried fruit and cakes; for Julia Plessis, knew the worthy gendarme's love for "une petite verre."

Sergeant Perrin rose. He was not at all the worse for the refreshment he had partaken of at

Dame Moret's, nor the ample addition he had just imbibed; but his cheeks, and especially that interesting feature, his nose, showed a great increase of colour.

"Well, Sergeant," said Lieutenant Thornton, "you are come, I hear, to pay us the usual visit and inspect our papers. All right; there is nothing like regularity, and knowing who you have in your district in these times."

"Oui, monsieur, oui. You have a reasonable idea of our duty—not always a very pleasant one; but mademoiselle here," turning to Julia, "always makes the chateau a pleasant place to visit."

As he spoke he placed his book on the table before him, and then very politely requested Monsieur De Tourville to let him have a look at his papers.

Sergeant Perrin read the paper presented, compared it with some remarks in his book, and, with a bow returned it, saying:

"Quite correct, Monsieur; but if you please I must just have a look at your man, Pierre Bom-

part—a mere form, but it's my duty, and Monsieur Le Maire requires an exact performance of my official duties."

"Certainly," said Lieutenant Thornton, "you shall see him, poor fellow. He is, and has been for years, deaf and dumb; but as fine and faithful a fellow as ever lived. I am so accustomed to his signs and ways that I scarcely remark his being dumb."

"Eh! mon Dieu!" said the sergeant referring to his book, "it does not say a word about Pierre Bompart's deafness, or his being dumb either."

"Nevertheless the poor fellow has to bear both severe afflictions," said Lieutenant Thornton, "but he is very cheerful, and looks well and hearty."

The sergeant's book having been signed both by Mabel and our hero, as Marie and Philip de Tourville, the ladies retired, and in a few minutes Bill Saunders walked into the room, gazing at Sergeant Perrin with a look of stolid indifference.

"Ha! mon Dieu! a fine fellow," said the gendarme, "what a misfortune!"

He then looked at his book and read out: "Pierre Bompart, aged thirty, native of Picardie.—Tell him, monsieur, to write his name here," continued the sergeant putting the book before our hero.

Here was a difficulty Lieutenant Thornton had not prepared for. Bill could write very well, his own name or anything else, but how to get him to comprehend that he was to write Pierre Bompart before the sergeant was another thing.

"Mon Dieu," said our hero, "that part of his education was neglected owing to his infirmity; but I will get him to put his mark if that will do."

"Sacristie, it must," said the sergeant, helping himself to another glass of Cognac, to brighten his ideas, which were getting rather confused. "A deaf and dumb man cannot well be expected to write. Pardon, monsieur, write his name

yourself, and say, 'for my servant Pierre Bompart, who is deaf and dumb.'"

This our hero did, and underneath the sergeant wrote "his mark," and handed the pen to Bill.

Lieutenant Thornton made a sign to the pretended Bompart to make a cross where he put his finger.

Bill, with a very ludicrous expression of countenance, took the pen and made a cross very nearly as long and as broad as the cross-tree of the "Diamond;" whilst the sergeant roared out:

"Tonnerre de Dieu! comment cela, diable — that cross."

"It is very plain, but rather large," returned our hero, vexed, though inclined to laugh, whilst the sergeant was busy reducing the dimensions of the formidable cross, which nearly erased all the previous writing. Bill looked on, and tapping the sergeant rather hard on the head with his knuckles, uttered such a hideous com-

bination of gutteral sounds, that the gendarme sprung to his feet, looking at him rather startled.

"Poor fellow," said Lieutenant Thornton, "he is very harmless, but not quite right here," and he touched his head.

"Ah! ça, do you say so," said the Frenchman, packing up his books and looking at Bill, who was amusing himself poising a large knife that was lying on the table on the point of his finger. "Your man is un drole; but parbleu, I would rather he attended on you than me, monsieur."

"I should say so, too, Sergeant Perrin, custom is everything; though he is subject to strange freaks, and does odd things, and is not very musical in the sounds he utters, yet his attachment makes up for every other defect."

Sergeant Perrin looked earnestly in the face of Lieutenant Thornton, with a somewhat bewildered expression, but taking up his hat he took his leave, passing out into the kitchen where he had left his comrade, and shortly after

both mounted their horses and rode away, taking the direction of the chateau of Monsieur Gramont.

On reaching that mansion, the sergeant was ushered into a chamber where Monsieur Le Maire was sitting alone, doing what Frenchmen very seldom do, sipping his claret after dinner.

"Well, sergeant, sit down and help yourself," said Monsieur Gramont; but the worthy gendarme had helped himself so often that day that his faculties were slightly obscured. He sat down, however, and cast a glance at the claret, a drink he detested, and said:

"I never drink claret, Monsieur le Maire, it sits uneasy on my stomach; but, ma foi, I confess, thanks to Dame Moret, and afterwards to the kindness of pretty Mademoiselle Julia, I have had enough. I do not usually you see, indulge, but I did so to day, to suit monsieur's views."

"You are very obliging, mon ami," said Monsieur Gramont, "we must do disagreeable

things sometimes, but a small glass of cognac will refresh you after your ride," and touching a bell, he ordered the domestic who answered the summons to bring in some brandy.

"Now, sergeant, what have you discovered from your visit to Dame Moret's, and to the Chateau Coulancourt."

"Pardieu, monsieur; I have managed to track the whole proceedings of this pretended Monsieur De Tourville, and his man Bompart from the very beginning."

"Bien! just as I suspected," said Monsieur Gramont, "but has this pretended De Tourville any idea you suspect him?"

"Parbleu! no, monsieur. If he played his part well, so did I mine. But there is another personage come on the stage that puzzles me."

"Never mind him now, sergeant, stick to this Philip De Tourville."

"Eh! bien, monsieur," returned the sergeant, helping himself to a glass of brandy, the liquor

making him exceedingly loquacious. "A day or two before I proceeded to Dame Moret's I sent one of my men to the village in plain clothes just to saunter about and pick up all he could. He learned that on the morning of the wreck, two men came to Dame Moret's house, and, as he supposed, staid there; but he heard afterwards, for no one saw them come out, that the next morning two persons were seen at the windows of Chateau Coulancourt, and a few days afterwards Dame Moret gave out that a Monsieur De Tourville and his servant were come to stay a few weeks at the chateau, to fish and look about the country. This was all he could learn, but this satisfied me that these two men were the two sailors seen crossing the sands from Lyon Point the morning after the wreck of the 'Vengeance.'"

"Of that I am quite satisfied," said Bertram Gramont; "did you make any further discoveries at Dame Moret's, or in the village?"

"No, Monsieur; the old woman was keen enough, and stuck to her report of Monsieur de

Tourville's residing in the chateau; but I found a young man in her house, who excites my suspicion, from his coming from the same part of the coast where the 'Vengeance' was wrecked. He gave his name as Louis Lebeau, of Rouen, a sailor. He said he belonged to a brig, from Bordeaux, bound to Hamburgh, that he and the captain quarrelled, and so he was put ashore at his own request. I appeared quite satisfied, did not even examine his papers, but I have an intelligent spy watching his movements; for it looks odd, all these strangers coming from the same part of the coast, and where there are no habitations."

"Humph," muttered Monsieur Gramont, "what can they be about. This Lebeau, depend on it, is another Englishman. Keep your eye on him, sergeant. Did you observe anything particular at the chateau?"

"No, Monsieur Gramont; they all seemed pretty well up to their parts; that big fellow, that passes himself off as Pierre Bompart, rather

startled me; but I'll swear he is neither deaf nor dumb. When he put his mark to my book, he made one as large as his foot, and I could see his eyes twinkle with suppressed laughter. What do you intend to do, Monsieur Gramont? It will not do to let these English aristocrats loose over the country."

"No; such is not my intention," said Bertram Gramont, "but we have them safe enough; so let us find out their designs. There is something going on between them and this ingenious Monsieur Plessis, who has contrived hitherto to keep his head on his shoulders marvellously well. Do you keep a watch upon this Louis Lebeau. I will send a messenger to Rouen, and make some enquiries there; but do nothing rash. I will manage before long to have the whole of them in a net they will not get out of."

As Sergeant Perrin and his men were bound to obey the instructions of Monsieur Gramont, he replied:—

"As you wish, Monsieur, I am ready to follow up your instructions."

Shortly after, the sergeant and his follower left the chateau.

The following day Bertram Gramont received letters from Paris; he and Augustine Vadier were together when they arrived. One was an official letter, from the Minister of Police, and contained but the following words:—

"Madame de Coulancourt has obtained permission to retire for the summer months to her Chateau de Coulancourt; have the movements of all the persons in the chateau carefully watched."

"I begin to fancy I see through their movements," said Bertram Gramont. "I am satisfied that Mademoiselle de Tourville is Madame de Coulancourt's daughter. That lady is coming down here, and I'll venture my life they have a project in their heads of escaping, with these Englishmen, some way or other to England."

"Eh, bien," said Augustine Vadier, "let them make the trial, you will gain your ends. She

will forfeit her estates if she is mad enough to attempt such a thing; and just as they are on the point of escaping, you can entrap them, and hand them over to the mercy of the law."

"Yes, that will do very well," replied Monsieur Gramont; "but I have taken a great fancy to the daughter; if I could make her my wife, and throw these Englishmen into prison, I shall do much better. If I fail I have still the other remedy. In a few days I will pay a friendly visit to Coulancourt, and see Madame; as Maire of the district, it is my duty to do so."

Augustine Vadier looked gloomy and discontented, but he made no further remark or opposition to his patron's projects.

CHAPTER IV.

TEN or twelve days after the events recorded in our last chapter, a very happy and pleasant party were assembled in the grand saloon of the Chateau Coulancourt.

Madame Coulancourt, her son Julian, her daughter Mabel, and our hero, were now together; each had related to the other his or her various adventures, and now all their attention and object was directed to an escape to England. Madame de Coulancourt had arrived from Paris two days before; need we describe her rapture and joy, when Julian threw himself into her arms, the son so long lost, and so deeply lamented.

Madame de Coulancourt was still a beautiful and fascinating woman, scarcely more than forty. Her ardent desire was to quit France for ever; she cared not for the loss of property, Coulancourt was all she could lose, having sold her other estates for nearly two hundred thousand francs. This Jean Plessis had managed, through the instrumentality of one of the directors, named Barras, a man of the most depraved and dissolute life, and of the most unbounded extravagance. At this time Barras had almost unlimited power; he was one of the three remaining directors. The other two, though men of stern integrity of purpose, were yet ruled by Barras, who alone of the three was capable of receiving foreign ambassadors, holding levées, and giving entertainments, for he was possessed of easy and polished manners, and put off the strange fantastic dress the directors at that period attired themselves in, assuming the graceful costume of the days of chivalry, the doublet and plumed bonnet of Francis I.

Barras was totally unprincipled; he sold

almost every office in his power to enable him to keep up his vain and luxurious career. The terrible depravity and licentiousness that prevailed in France at this era, it is well known, was the result of deplorable corruption. Barras permitted the sale of Madame de Coulancourt's property, reserving for himself the half of whatever it produced; thus Jean Plessis managed to secure the other half, as well as to obtain permission for her to visit Chateau Coulancourt.

The fearful state of France, and the horrid depravity of manners prevailing in Paris, had first excited in Madame Coulancourt the wish to attempt a flight to England. The only drawback that held her irresolute was the fear of dragging Jean Plessis and his family into trouble. But that gentleman was secure in the favour of Barras; and declared, if her escape was to be attempted, it was whilst Barras was in power. No human being could conjecture how long that power might last, so conflicting and evanescent was everything in those days.

Monsieur Plessis and family were gone to

Havre for a day or two, to make some purchases; thus, only Madame Coulancourt, her son and daughter, and Lieutenant Thornton, remained in the chateau with their domestics and Rose. They were planning their intended project of escaping into Flanders, and thence to England; but our hero thought that mode of getting out of France hazardous in the extreme.

"I was conversing with Julian last night upon this subject," he observed, "and we both agreed that our flight could much more easily be contrived by sea."

"By sea!" repeated mother and daughter, "how procure a vessel? and where embark? we should be detected at once, at any port in France."

"I have a bold project in my head," said the English Lieutenant; "we have hitherto escaped all suspicion; even Monsieur Gramont is growing polite and affable, and pays you every attention."

"Ah," said Mabel, shaking her head, "I strongly doubt his politeness; there is something

working in his brain, I am sure. I have caught his eye fixed upon you several times with a very meaning glance."

The young man smiled, and looking affectionately at Mabel, said:—

"If he had any suspicion he would never have allowed all this time to elapse without acting. However, I will tell you how Julian and I have thought of proceeding. The 'Vengeance' privateer is almost ready for sea. She is repaired, and all nearly complete, lying at anchor in a pool in the creek; and, from what Rose Moret heard her brother-in-law say, it is her captain's intention in a week or so, to take her round to Havre for stores."

"But, dear William," observed Mabel, anxiously, "the idea of you and Julian seizing this privateer with her crew on board is surely only an imaginary project."

"No, dearest, we are not so mad as that," said Lieutenant Thornton, with a smile. "You must hear me out. Captain O'Loughlin is still on the coast with the 'Onyx' corvette. Rose

says her brother in his lugger passed within hail of the 'Onyx' the day before yesterday. Now, Julian and I purpose to go to-morrow to Lyon Head, and have a look-out, and to repeat our visit every day till we are able to make a signal to the corvette. If we fail in establishing communication with her, of course our project falls to the ground, for three persons could never dream of capturing the 'Vengeance.' To signal the 'Onyx' is worth the trial, however."

"Well," said Madame Coulancourt, after a moment's thought, "I do think William's project has a chance of success; though all depends on being able, as he says, of communicating with the corvette."

"Then supposing you do communicate with Captain O'Loughlin," said Mabel, anxiously, "how would you proceed?"

"Oh, nothing easier in that case," interrupted Julian eagerly, "with a boat's crew we could seize the 'Vengeance,' which William is so desperately anxious to do, to pay off Captain Gaudet for his cruelty, embark you on board, and before any

alarm could be given at Havre, we should be at sea, and with the corvette hold our own against any armed crafts sent after us."

"Would not this involve Jean Plessis with the authorities?" asked Madame Coulancourt.

"Not more than any other mode of escape," replied her nephew; "but Monsieur Plessis is so secure of the favour of Barras, and has him so much in his power, that he feels very little uneasiness even if he remained behind. Though he has not yet spoken to you on the subject, he is nearly as anxious to quit France with his family as you are. The precariousness of life and property in this country urges him to emigrate and settle in England, and I have offered him," continued Lieutenant Thornton, "on succeeding to the property I am entitled to, the stewardship over the whole, and a sufficient annuity to live independently on."

"Oh, I am sure," cried both Madame Coulancourt and Mabel eagerly, "if that is Jean Plessis's wish and intention we shall both be able to render him not only independent, but most com-

fortable. He has all his life," continued Madame, "served the Duke, my husband, and myself with unshaken fidelity, and I feel towards him as towards one connected with my family by ties of relationshisp. Julian also will be entitled to the Etherton property, though, at the same time, it will be cruel to deprive those now in possession of all they have so long considered their own; therefore, some kind of decision ought to take place. I am sure Julian will agree with me."

"Most certainly, dear mother; my uncle or his son, the latter now holds the title and property, were innocently inheritors of it, and to deprive them of all now might involve them in difficulties insurmountable."

"And yet," said Lieutenant Thornton, somewhat sternly, "they, especially the late Baronet, felt no pity or remorse in not only refusing Mabel's claims, but in adding insult and mockery to their heartlessness, though they knew in their hearts that my poor little protegée, as I was then in the habit of styling her, was thrown in

a manner helpless upon the exertions of two poor sailors."

"And nobly the two poor sailors protected little Mabel," said our heroine, the tears rising in her eyes, as she looked with devoted affection into the face of her lover.

"I at all events, dear Mabel," said our hero, "am richly repaid by living in the memory of her I protected to the best of my ability."

"Ah," said Madame Coulancourt, with an earnestness unmistakable; "would to God we were all in dear England! What I have suffered in this land I can never tell; even when restored to liberty, living in Paris, and forced to enter society to avoid the remarks, and the secret espionage of the minister of police. When the constraint and gloom of the Jacobin rule was discarded, the thirst for amusement and dissipation that followed was carried to an unbounded and disgusting excess, in manners, in attire, and in immorality. It was only in the circles of Madame Josephine Beauharnais, that most amiable of

women, and Madame Canabas, whose beauty was perfectly entrancing, and Madame De Stael, that a refuge was to be obtained from the licentiousness every where else openly and unblushingly displayed. You would scarcely believe it, but I was forced to attend balls, where none but the relations of persons who had suffered death under the axe of the guillotine were allowed to appear. Our hair also was tied up as it would have been previous to execution. These fêtes were termed 'Balls of the victims.' Then came the dreadful famine; ah, memory will always cling to the scenes of the past, and yet how truly merciful has Providence been to me! Have I not my children? It is wrong to murmur, whilst joy and thankfulness should fill my heart."

Lieutenant Thornton had his eyes fixed upon his aunt; he thought he had never beheld a face possessing so perfectly fascinating an expression. In her youth she must have been—lovely as Mabel was—much more beautiful; her height was tall and commanding, with easy and

graceful manner. The evening passed pleasantly over, conversing on the past, and proposing many schemes for the future.

Monsieur Gramont was said to have gone to Paris; all appeared tranquil around them. Lieutenant Thornton and Julian Arden the following morning, set out for a visit to Lyon Head, to have a look out over old ocean. The month was not yet out during which the "Onyx" was expected to be cruising on and off the coast, and the two young men hoped to be able during their trips to the Head to get a glimpse of her, for they both knew what a sincere, anxious friend Captain O'Loughlin was, and how determinedly he would keep his word, provided his duty permitted him to do so. The distance to Lyon Head from the chateau was scarcely six miles, and, by avoiding the village, the road led through a very deserted part of the country, and across ranges of sand hills.

Skirting the village, the two young men soon came in upon the desert track, and commenced traversing those singular mountains of sand,

many of them above one hundred feet in height, and covered with a wild and curious species of vegetation, peculiar to the n and their soil. These sand hills were three miles in breadth, and terminated at the eastern extremity by a rocky shore. Long before they reached Lyon Head, they obtained a clear view of the sea to the westward; but the entrance to Havre was shut out from their sight by the cliffs of Caux. They could see many vessels, making evidently for the mouth of the Seine, but no vessel of war met their anxious gaze. On gaining the Head, they commanded a view to the eastward. Julian carried a pocket-telescope, but nothing in the shape of a cruiser met their gaze.

"I am not at all disheartened," said Lieutenant Thornton; "it may be several days before we see the 'Onyx.'"

"Neither am I," said Julian; "so let us, as there is nothing in sight, cross this head-land, and get a sight of the creek where the 'Vengeance' lies."

In half-an-hour they had gained a part of the

coast that commanded a view of the creek and its mouth. It was a very singular inlet, extremely narrow at the mouth and from the sea exceedingly difficult to be discovered, and dangerous to enter on account of rocks crossing its mouth, for the tide being low, they could see that the rocks they were then looking at would be covered at high water. A quarter of a mile inside, the inlet opened into a fine pool of water, never entirely dry, in which they could see not only that the ' Vengeance ' lay afloat, but that there was a very handsome brig, a cutter, and half-a-dozen large lugger boats, fishing crafts, also afloat; part of the creek ran towards Coulancourt, which was perfectly dry at low water. The other branch led away to the eastward, and seemed to be the run of a large river.

Descending the hill, they made their way over the rocks till they gained a spot where they could obtain a near view of the celebrated privateer that caused Sir Sidney Smith two years of miserable imprisonment. From where they were concealed, they had a clear view, between the rocks, of the " Vengeance," which ap-

peared almost ready for sea, not having suffered in her hull so much by the fire as was supposed, for on running ashore, the ground swell rising in upon her flaming deck, immediately extinguished the fire. She was a remarkably handsome craft, very long, and with a graceful sheer and elongated bow ; with masts much tauter than her previous ones, and her yards proportionably square, so that her lug sails were greatly increased. Several men were employed setting up the rigging; the mizen mast was yet unshipped. On the opposite side of the creek was a long wooden shed containing stores, and several other sheds, and a very long stone building shewed that vessels were built and repaired there, for a large collection of spars and timber lay along the shore and in the water.

"I would rather cut that vessel out," said Lieutenant Thornton, "than sink a French seventy-four. My gallant Commander may linger years in a French prison owing to her, whilst I and Saunders nearly fell victims to her cut-throat Commander."

"Your only consolation is, William," replied Julian, "that you are here to protect my mother and sister in escaping out of this country."

The inspection was ended for that day. The two following they resumed their watch, and were equally unsuccessful; but, on the third morning, Julian was certain that a ship lying-to in the distance was the "Onyx." They watched her for hours, but she remained almost stationary. Unfortunately, in returning home, Julian, descending the rough side of the cliff, sprained his ancle, which swelled so much after the walkthat he found it impossible to leave the house the next morning. Our hero, having seen the vessel lying-to off the land, was more anxious to go, and Monsieur Plessis having returned from Havre, stated that there was some popular commotion on foot in that town, and a large force of gendarmes had been called in from Rouen to aid the military there.

Taking Bill Saunders with him, our hero set out for Lyon Head, rather late in the morning. Mabel was uneasy at his going, and tried to

persuade him to stay till the next day, when Julian would probably be able to accompany him.

"I am so anxious, dear Mabel," he said, "to get you out of this country. No mortal possessed of a treasure, ever coveted its security as I do your safety. That troublesome Monsieur Gramont is absent, the people of Havre are in commotion—now is the time to get away. If that vessel Julian declares to be the corvette is really the "Onyx," she may be close in to-day; the weather is beautiful, and a nice breeze blowing off shore."

So, tenderly pressing the hand that lay so lovingly in his, he departed, with Bill in great spirits, rejoicing at having a prospect of looking again at his favourite element, and of getting once more on board a British man-of-war, and regaining the full power of his tongue.

CHAPTER V.

Lieutenant Thornton and Bill Saunders reached the sand hills without meeting a single person, or, as they thought, without attracting the notice of any one; but they were mistaken. As they crossed the sand hills, every now and then the bare head of a lad, some fourteen years of age popped up from behind a hill, and regarded earnestly their progress, following them carefully, and concealing himself in the hollows and thick rushes, in the damp places. They had scarcely reached the rocks, and climbed nearly to the summit, when the loud boom of a heavy gun reverberated along the cliffs.

"Blow me," exclaimed Bill, springing over some rocks, "there's a frigate's gun; it was quite close under the cliffs."

The next moment the top-gallant sails of a ship of war shewed above the head, but they could not make out the vessel, for, though her top-sails were plainly visible, she was full a mile off shore; and our hero and Bill were in a hollow—they perceived a gig, with four oars, and a young lad in the stern sheets, pulling out from under the head.

"English! hurrah!" exclaimed Bill, with a cheer that pealed over the sea, and reached the ears of those in the boat. The men rested on their oars, and Bill waved a red flag, which he had brought in his pocket, in the air. Instantly another flag was waved from the boat, and her head turned for the beach.

"Hurrah!" again shouted Bill, and both he and Lieutenant Thornton made for the beach, but as they came out from the hollow, and reached the foot of a steep descent, a loud voice from above hailed, in French:

"Stand, or we fire."

Our hero looked up, and beheld more than a dozen men in uniform, some fifty yards above them, with muskets pointed directly at them.

"Spring over the cliff, Bill, or we're dead men," and, with a bound, he threw himself over, instantly followed by Saunders. As they did so, a volley of musketry rattled over the spot, and shattered portions of the rock on which, the moment before, they had been standing.

A man sprang up amongst the gendarmes—it was Augustine Vadier—who, shaking his clenched hand fiercely, exclaimed to the men, "Re-load, or, curse them, they will escape, and then follow them."

The two Englishmen rolled over the ascent, with fragments of rock, and red earth clattering down with them, for ten or fifteen yards. Unfortunately, a huge fragment of rock struck our hero on the head, leaving him totally senseless at the foot of the descent. Bill picked himself up, a little be-

wildered by the rapidity of their descent, but, seeing his master senseless, he gave a shout of rage, and cast back a look of vengeance on the gendarmes scrambling down the rocks; but the men in the boat shouted loudly, "Quick, quick; to the beach!"

Lifting the senseless body of his master, Bill, with a desperate energy, rushed towards the spot where the boat had run right in on the beach. Another volley, the balls rattling all round him, expedited Bill's movements; but a powerful ally had now come to his aid—the corvette had opened the scene of action; a flash, a wreath of smoke, and then the iron messenger struck the cliff above, scattering the splinters of the rocks into the very faces of the pursuing gendarmes. Augustine Vadier was struck to the earth by a huge splinter of stone in the right eye. The men threw themselves back and lay flat under the rocks, for another gun pealed over the quiet sea, and the iron storm—for this time it was grape—tore up the rocks within ten paces of the Frenchmen, which

made them spring to their legs and retreat down the other side of the cliff, dragging the bleeding and furious Augustine Vadier with them.

In the meantime Bill reached the boat, panting with exertion, and two of the men, leaping into the water, ran to his assistance.

"Not dead, I trust," cried the midshipman, gazing at the still insensible body of our hero, as the men placed him in the bottom of the boat, on a sail

"Dead!" shrieked Bill, gasping for breath; "if he's dead, blow my brains out, and I'll thank you! I don't care a curse to live if the lubbers have shot the bravest officer that ever breathed," he continued, the heat-drops pouring down his face, and his emotion blinding him.

"No, thank God! he is not dead," said the young midshipman, as the boat pulled towards the corvette; "he is bleeding from a cut on the side of the head—but who is he, and who are you, my man? I thought this gentleman was Mr. Julian Arden."

"Not dead; hurrah!" exclaimed Bill, tossing his cap into the air; "give us your fin; blow me, but you're a fine lad. Lord love ye! I'm a true salt, though you do see me rigged in this hermaphrodite fashion. That's Lieutenant Thornton—bless him! he's coming to—and I'm Bill Saunders. Both on us belongs to the old 'Diamond,' and if that ere craft is the 'Onyx,' her Commander will be as glad to see Lieutenant Thornton as his own brother."

"You are right, my fine fellow," answered the young midshipman; "Captain O'Loughlin would give his life at any time to serve this gentleman. See, he is recovering fast," watching Bill wash the blood from the cut and bathe his master's face; "he was only stunned."

"It's all right! Blow me, if I ain't as glad as if a ship's anchor was taken off my breast," said Bill, as the boat shot up alongside the "Onyx" corvette, Commander O'Loughlin, Lieutenant Pole, and numbers of the crew, crowding and gazing over the bulwarks eagerly.

"Who have you there, Master Burdett?" en-

quired O'Loughlin anxiously, "not Mr. Julian Arden wounded, I trust."

"No, sir," said the midshipman, "it's Lieutenant Thornton."

"What! Sir Oscar de Bracy!" vehemently exclaimed the Commander, springing over the side into the boat, with an expression of deep emotion in his manner and voice.

Our hero just then opened his eyes, and made an effort to get up.

"Thank God, he is only stunned," said O'Loughlin, joyfully, as his friend gazed into his face, with a smile, saying, in a low voice:—

"Not the first knock on the head, Patrick, I have had; I am not much hurt; where is Bill, Bill Saunders—you remember him?"

"Here, your honour, here, thank God! and your honour's nothing the worse. The lubbers thought to pepper us, but his honour, Captain O'Loughlin, gave them a dose they did'nt like to stay to have repeated."

"My fine fellow, I am glad to see you?" said the Commander of the "Onyx," shaking Bill's

hand as warmly as he would have done that of a friend; "I thought if ever one was heard of, the other would not be far off."

With the assistance of Charles Pole, our hero was conveyed into the cabin, and the surgeon proceeded to dress the wound in the head, which he pronounced to be extremely trifling; the point of the rock inflicting the wound, had not caused the insensibility, but a blow against a flat rock, at the bottom of the descent.

A glass or two of wine seemed to revive Lieutenant Thornton, and with his return to consciousness, he began to experience great anxiety respecting Mabel and her mother, lest they might be implicated by this untoward event; were they all discovered, or were the men that surprised and fired upon him and Bill, only watching the movements of those in the boat? but this latter idea was discarded, for by the shouts and words of the gendarmes, they were evidently watching his own and Bill's movements, and not the corvette's.

"In the name of fate, Sir Oscar," said Com-

mander O'Loughlin, as soon as he perceived his friend sufficiently restored to talk; "in the name of fate, how came you on this part of the coast? Do you know who I thought you were?"

"Oh, yes, quite well, Patrick; you took me for Julian Arden," returned our hero; "he and I have, these last four or or five days, been daily watching you from Lyon Head."

"Be the powers of war, but this is very extraordinary; I was lying to yesterday, after chasing a brig into some creek off this head, and this morning I sent young Burdett in the gig to see if he could make out the mouth of a creek or inlet of the sea, I knew to be somewhere near where I picked you up, and as I was passing my glass along the cliff, I caught sight of a party of armed men, passing along the outward face of the head; the sun was glancing on their muskets and accoutrements, so I fired a gun to bring the boat back. I beheld the men disappear round the point, and shortly after, as we stood on and opened the other side, we saw the flash of their

muskets, whilst pursuing you, as it turned out; so I let fly a shot to freshen their way, for I thought the fugitive might be Julian Arden; but how you came to be there with Bill Saunders, amazes me; did you escape out of prison?"

"Thank God, I have not been in one since I left the 'Diamond;' poor Sir Sidney Smith, and young Wright, were marched off to Paris. But, my dear friend, I am in a dreadful state of anxiety; I must get ashore again to-night."

"Faith, that would be madness," said Captain O'Loughlin; "the whole coast will be roused, and a keen watch kept for miles along the beach."

Our hero looked deeply distressed; after a moment he said:—

"Do you know that that infernal privateer, the 'Vengeance,' that caused the captivity of Sir Sidney Smith, is actually at anchor within the creek you mentioned just now?"

"The devil she is! then, by the powers of Moll Kelly, I'll cut her out or burn her."

"She'll never burn," returned our hero, bitterly; "though I was deuced near burning in her; but to make you up to the thing—give me another glass of wine, I'm as well now as ever I was—and if we are to have the task of cutting out this 'Vengeance,' it must be done to-night, or not at all, for if we delay, they will work her some miles up the creek."

Lieutenant Thornton then gave his friend a brief but clear account of what had befallen him from the period of Sir Sidney Smith's attempting to cut out the "Vengeance" from the Port of Havre, to his arrival on board the corvette.

"Well, by the immortal powers, you amaze me. Mabel in France, and Madame Coulancourt and her son Julian restored to each other! How far is the chateau from the coast?"

"Fully six miles."

"Then we must have the privateer this very night; there's a breeze off the land; let me see, it will be high water about eleven o'clock;

there's no moon, and it's cloudy; but do you feel strong enough for the exertion?"

"Strong enough!" repeated Lieutenant Thornton; "there's nothing the matter with me; it was only the suddenness and violence of the blow that caused insensibility; but I rejoice to say that's quite gone now."

"How many men do you think there are on board the 'Vengeance?'" questioned O'Loughlin.

"I counted fourteen or fifteen the day before yesterday; there may be three or four more. There is an armed brig in the creek."

"What an hermaphrodite brig, with a great rake in her mainmast, and a red streak, and pierced for eight guns?"

"By Jove, I think so; she is an hermaphrodite, and I know her mainmast rakes a good deal, for Julian remarked it to me; I was so intently regarding the 'Vengeance,' that I heeded the brig very little."

"By St. Patrick, I must have that brig," said the Commander of the corvette, "four days

ago I chased her some ten leagues to the eastward of Lyon point, and lost her just here in a fog of not an hour's duration, and a stark calm; and, be the powers of war, when the fog cleared off, the deuce a bit of the brig was to be seen. She evidently was towed into that inlet. What kind of a place is it?"

"A fine sheet of water inside; but there are several rocks to the right of the entrance, covered at high water, and the entrance itself is a blind one."

"Yes, faith, I know it is; but we'll find it with the boats. How's your appetite? We'll have some supper, and then prepare for action."

"My appetite is good enough; but I am intensely anxious about Mabel, her mother, and Julian; I fear they will be suspected, seized, and sent to Paris. I am sure that detestable Monsieur Gramont is at the bottom of this affair. They must have thought to seize Julian and myself; and yet, why let us go to Lyon head for that purpose, when we could as readily have been arrested at the chateau? It is puzzling."

"It's marvellously unfortunate," said Captain O'Loughlin, with a vexed air, "and for the life of me, I cannot see how this untoward event can be remedied. You may depend on it the military will be on the alert from Havre, to prevent any communication with the chateau; and you yourself know the rules of the service would prevent me attempting an attack upon the mansion; though if I thought we had any chance of rescuing Madame Coulancourt and Mabel, and that the lives of my men would not be uselessly sacrificed, I would cheerfully run the risk of being broke and dismissed the service."

"No, my kind friend, that must not be; your men must not incur such a risk as that, without a chance of benefiting the service. We will cut out this 'Vengeance,' because she has been a pest to our commerce, and will be again if she is not taken or destroyed; but I wish, though I certainly do not owe him any good will myself, I wish the Captain of the privateer's life to be spared, because he is the son-in-law of a very

good and kind old dame, that did me great service."

"Unless he kills himself in his desperation, for, by your account, he is a ferocious fellow. I will give orders to avoid killing him if possible. You will take the command of the launch, with a long twelve-pound carronade in her, young Burdett, and sixteen men; I will take the pinnace; and Pole, with an eight-pounder and fourteen men, will take the other boat. I think this force will be sufficient, even if they have taken alarm and increased their crew; but they may fancy, from the secresy and security of this inlet, that no attempt may be thought of against them."

"It's very possible; but I think they may be alarmed, seeing the corvette so close in with the land, and station men on the rocks on each side the creek," said our hero. "Do you know if there is any vessel of war in Havre?"

"Not any of consequence," said O'Loughlin, "except armed luggers, a cutter, two chasse-mares, and, I believe, a large privateer, just

ready for sea. Our fleet is off Brest, and has swept the channel."

Lieutenant Thornton, before the hour arrived for setting out on the expedition, felt not the slightest uneasiness from the contusion on his head, but was anxious and disturbed lest his absence might materially affect the future happiness of those most dear to him. He was also greatly puzzled respecting the motives and means adopted for seizing him and Julian—for those awaiting him at Lyon Head, no doubt thought that Julian would, as usual, accompany him. He had observed a man, not in uniform, stand forward prominently amongst the armed men, and, with violent gesticulations, urge them to reload and pursue; who he was he could have no idea, but it satisfied him that they had been stationed there to intercept him. On ascending upon deck he found the "Onyx" was lying-to, with her foretop sails aback, and her courses brailed. There was a steady breeze from the land, the water quite smooth, and the sky cloudy. It was now nearly nine o'clock, and

the crew were busy preparing for the expedition.

"It will not be dark till nearly ten o'clock," said Lieutenant Pole, joining our hero. "You had a lucky escape from those fellows, William."

"By Jove! I had, Charles," responded our hero. "Have you had any letters or news from England since Julian Arden left you?"

"No, we have not spoken with any craft from England who left later than ourselves. We were in company with the 'Niger,' Captain Foote, two or three days. He chased a large privateer lugger, who escaped by running in under the Penmarks, and anchored; and he very gallantly cut her out with his boats, after a very desperate resistance; but she had no news, except a rumour of peace."

"I do not believe there is the slightest chance of it," said our hero, thoughtfully, for he was thinking of Mabel. "Did you hear where the 'Diamond' was?"

"I think I heard one of the officers of the 'Niger' say she returned to Plymouth after the

unfortunate attempt upon the 'Vengeance.' What do you propose doing, William?"

"I am so put out by this unfortunate affair that I cannot exactly say. I had hoped to effect the escape of Madame Coulancourt and her family from France, but I fear that is now impossible. They may accuse her of intending to leave the country—imprison her, and confiscate her property. In fact there is no knowing what train of misfortunes may ensue. I have a great mind, after this cutting out business, to land and endeavour to discover how they are situated."

"I fear you would rashly risk your life, William, and do no good. What could you do single-handed? Besides, now you are free, you will be expected either to retire from the service or return and report yourself."

"I will not retire during a time of war, Charles, you may depend. If I could only ascertain any tidings of those in the chateau I should be lighter in heart."

"Who knows what may occur to-night," said

Lieutenant Pole; "something may turn up—it's impossible to foresee what may happen."

"True, there may be no alarm at the chateau, except for my, perhaps to them unaccountable, disappearance."

"May I ask you, William, why you do not assume the name of De Bracy, which every one that knows you is aware you are entitled to."

"Because, Charles, I cannot see that I am as yet entitled, by law, to claim that name. For the present I prefer retaining that of my kind old benefactor. I can fight, or die, or achieve fame under that name as well as any other. I had hoped to have embraced a dear parent, and to have been acknowledged by him, but it was the will of Providence to take his life. I have felt this much, but dare not murmur; so now let us to the work on hand—we must have that 'Vengeance.'"

A little after ten o'clock the "Onyx" filled her topsails and stood in for the cliff headland of Lyon Point. The boats were all ready and the men selected, and eager to be led by Lieu-

tenant Thornton, whose gallantry and general good fortune, until the last mishap, was pretty well known to them.

There was a slight breeze from the land, which was in their favour.

"I have changed our mode of attack," said Captain O'Loughlin to our hero, as they walked the quarter-deck, gazing out at the indistinct line of coast, half hid by the haze; "though the change has greatly annoyed Pole. I have determined upon his taking the command of the "Onyx" during our absence. My second Lieutenant will take his place. Between you and me, Mr. Joyce is a brave fellow, but somewhat rash. I would rather not leave the ship under his care in our absence; on Pole I can depend in every way—he is cool, calculating, and skilful."

"I think you are quite right, but I fancy if you staid on board yourself, and let Charles take the pinnace, you would do better still."

"Be the powers of war! catch me at that," said O'Loughlin, laughing, "you are thinking

of Sir Sidney, and that there's a chance of two Commanders failing in cutting out this redoubtable 'Vengeance.'"

"I hope not, Patrick, for, by Jove! that would be paying dearly for the chance of a privateer. It is not that. It strikes me that Commanders should not, except in extreme cases, lead in these cutting out affairs."

"Oh, bother! what's a Commander? Many a worthy lieutenant is worth a dozen of some of them. If a Commander does get knocked on the head, it makes way for another—it's all in the way of business; besides, I like a thing of the kind. What do you think of the sailing qualities of the corvette?"

"She moves fast and easily through the water," said Lieutenant Thornton, "she is a handsome craft, and, I should say, makes good weather of it, from her beam. She's a splendid sea boat, and as stiff as a church steeple; it must be a hard gale that will make her want two reefs in her topsail."

"Mr. Thomson," hailed the Commander,

"put a man in the chains, and take a cast of the lead; we are closer in now than we were this morning,"

"Aye, aye, sir," said the mate, and the clear, steady voice of the leads-man was heard giving out the soundings, and shortly after the "Onyx" was hove up in the wind, and an anchor dropped in about nine fathoms of water, about three-quarters of a mile from the shore, and a mile to the eastward of Lyon Head.

The boats were all in the water, the crews served each with a cutlass and brace of pistols. The launch was a fine boat; she carried a long twelve-pounder loaded with grape in her bows, and was steered by Master Burdett, the mid-shipman. Bill Saunders was in his glory; he was to have, by special permission, the charge of the gun.

In a few minutes, all being ready, the men in their places, the row locks muffled, the word to give way given, off they started, in high spirits. —Captain O'Loughlin leading in the pinnace, in which he had a lieutenant of marines and

eight men, besides twelve picked men of his own crew. He left the "Vengeance" to our hero and the two boats, his intention being to carry out the brig.

There was scarcely a ripple against the rocks, the water was so smooth. They soon came up with the mouth of the creek, which, by keeping close alongside, they easily found, though from some distance off it would be scarcely visible. The entrance was not unlike that into Dartmouth, but infinitely narrower. The tide was nearly at full, so the boats glided noiselessly up the narrow part—the cliffs being very high and precipitous on both sides. The breeze came steadily down the creek. Just as they opened the wide part, they became aware of a large square-rigged craft, coming down dead before the wind, under topsails and top-gallant sails.

"The brig," said Lieutenant Thornton to the midshipman. The pinnace was about sixty yards ahead. Just as he uttered the words a bright line of fire flashed from one side of the

creek, and the rattle of musketry broke upon the stillness of the night.

"Discovered, by Jupiter!" said our hero, standing up, "give way, my lads,—anyone hit —keep steady, men."

"No one hit, sir; all right," shouted Bill from the bow. "Look, sir, the brig is running ashore!"

Our hero perceived that Captain O'Loughlin pulled up alongside, and, though received with a smart fire of musketry and pistols, soon gained her deck, and then the loud cheer of his men was echoed from the steep cliffs.

"All right, my men," said our hero; "give way, and now for the 'Vengeance;'" and, through a fierce fire of musketry from the shore, the launch flew through the still waters of the creek.

They were within seventy yards of the "Vengeance" when she opened fire from an eight-pounder, crammed to the muzzle with grape. The water round the launch was lashed into

foam, and the spray flew over the men, but, as often happens, strange to say, in attacks of the same kind, not a man was hit.

"Now, Bill, give them an answer," said our hero, and then followed the loud boom of the launch's twelve-pounder, as it poured its deadly contents over the decks of the "Vengeance," and the next instant they were alongside, and Lieutenant Thornton, cutlass in hand, sprang upon her deck, followed by his brave crew, though a desperate volley of musketry was fired full in their faces, killing one man and wounding three.

"Force them overboard, my lads," shouted our hero, as he drove the Frenchmen before him, and saved young Burdett, as he scrambled over the bulwarks, from being annihilated by the butt end of a musket. There were full thirty men on board the "Vengeance," and Captain Pierre Gaudet, foaming at the mouth, and furious with passion, was urging them to a furious resistance. Just then Lieutenant Joyce boarded the "Vengeance" on her larboard quar-

ter, taking the enraged Frenchmen in the rear. Lieutenant Thornton, wishing to spare Pierre Gaudet's life, burst through all opposition, and, singling him out, disarmed him, and catching him by the collar, dragged him to the side.

"Curse you! I know you," shouted Pierre Gaudet, striving to draw out a knife. "Set her on fire, drag out the plugs!" he roared amid the din, but Lieutenant Thornton tumbled him over the bulwarks. Desperately he clung to anything he could catch hold of.

"I wish to save your life, villain," exclaimed our hero, "though you do not deserve any clemency," and, dragging Gaudet from his last hold, he threw him into the launch, and called to the men to surrender. There were five dead upon the deck, and several wounded. Bill was driving all before him with a handspike, having broken his cutlass. Several of the crew of the privateer threw themselves overboard, others surrendered, but a few desperate hands rushed below and fired the fore-cabin, which was, however, extinguished instantly, and

preparations were then made for casting her loose, when it was discovered that she was chained to the shore, and the massive chain on board was riveted to a huge bolt.

"Now, Mr. Joyce, be ready," said our hero, "to set sail the moment I hail you; I will go ashore and cast off this chain," and he leaped into the launch, followed by Bill and some half dozen of the men. Just then Captain O'Loughlin rowed up alongside, having previously sent the brig out with half-a-dozen hands in her.

Whilst Lieutenant Thornton was pulling towards the shore, Pierre Gaudet threw himself into the water, swam to the shore, or on board one of the fishing luggers near.

As the party in the launch pulled towards the beach they were assailed by a discharge of musketry from a large number of men drawn up on the shore.

"Now, Bill, give them a dose, and disperse them."

"Aye, aye, sir, I'll physic them," and bang

went the twelve-pounder, loaded with grape, and well-directed, at the body of men drawn up under the rocks, and dispersing them in double quick time, leaving three of their number dead upon the beach.

"Load again, and keep them from closing," said our hero, springing ashore, with his men, and seeking to find what the chain was fastened to.

The men who had fled rallied as soon as they had gained the shelter of the rocks, and again opened fire, the balls knocking up the sand all round the launch; but Bill was soon ready with another dose of grape, and dislodged them from their position.

Lieutenant Thornton, to his dismay, found the chain was riveted to an anchor, stuck in the sands, over a ton weight. Confounded at this *contretemps*, he was hesitating what to do, when he was hailed from the "Vengeance," telling him they had cut away the deck with axes, and freed the ring-bolt to which the chain was fast, the enemy having, probably, in their hurry,

hastily riveted the chain to a bolt, instead of taking a turn round the main mast, and then riveting it. The Frenchmen, still from a distance, kept up a dropping fire upon our hero and his party; but, wading on board the launch, with only two men slightly wounded, they all returned on board the "Vengeance."

CHAPTER VI.

"We have her at last, by St. Patrick!" said Captain O'Loughlin, shaking our hero by the hand, "though I am sorry to say we have lost three men and seven hurt, three or four severely. You had a sharp fight on board here, I see. There are six poor fellows dead, and more than a dozen severely hurt with cutlass wounds. Confound those fellows ashore, they keep popping away." As the Captain said the words, he stooped and picked up his hat, knocked off by a musket ball just as the lugger was dropping down the reach, under her fore lug, with the down tide.

Putting all the enemy's wounded or hurt into the boats, they sent them on board the nearest fishing lugger, whose crew had pulled on shore. Sail was then made on the "Vengeance," and, a fresh breeze blowing, they ran rapidly down the creek, Lieutenant Thornton steering, and keeping close to the west side of the inlet, thus avoiding the sunken rocks that lay along the other shore.

As they gained the open sea, they perceived the brig, with her foretop-sail aback, waiting for them. On running up alongside, the second mate of the "Onyx," who had the command of her, said they had struck hard against a sunken rock in coming out, but that the brig did not appear to have received any damage, as she made no water; but they were at first afraid she would have remained fast.

"I told you, O'Loughlin," said Lieutenant Thornton, "to keep well to the westward, for the other day, at low water, I remarked a range of sunken rocks on the east side."

"By Jove! in the confusion I forgot your

warning," returned Captain O'Loughlin; "however, our expedition has turned out well."

"They were evidently prepared for us," said our hero; "they suspected that an attack would be made on the privateer, and if they had fastened that chain round the mainmast, and riveted it, we should have had to set her on fire, for the anchor she was fastened to on shore by that ponderous chain was considerably over a ton."

"Yes, and besides that," returned the Commander of the 'Onyx,' "they evidently mistook the bolt to which they did fasten the chain; for close to it was a bolt that goes right through the main beam, and that we could not have cut out as we did the deck bolt."

"Had you much resistance on board the brig?"

"No, nothing to talk of; there were but fourteen men in her, and they evidently thought to get clear off during the night."

They were now close up with the "Onyx," and Captain O'Loughlin and Lieutenant Thorn-

ton went on board. The Commander of the corvette having seen to the care of his wounded, Captain O'Loughlin, our hero, and Lieutenant Pole proceeded to the cabin to obtain some refreshment after their certainly arduous undertaking.

"I tell you what you must do, dear friend," said O'Loughlin to the thoughtful Lieutenant Thornton, "you had better take the prizes to Portsmouth. You will be made a commander at once. Besides Mr. Stanmore is most anxious for your return to England; he told me there would not be the slightest difficulty in asserting your claims to the name and property of the late lamented Sir Oscar de Bracy. The document signed by my generous benefactor, and his will, being so very satisfactory."

Our hero did not reply for a moment, for in truth he was greatly distressed in mind.

"If I followed the bent of my mind, Patrick," he said, rousing himself from his sombre thoughts, "I should go ashore and endeavour to gain some intelligence of those so dear to me,

and who no doubt are experiencing intense anxiety, for they must have heard the firing at Coulancourt, and guessed the cause of it. I do really think it possible I might escape detection."

"Then upon my conscience I do not," said Captain O'Loughlin, "you would surely lose your life. The captain of the 'Vengeance' has escaped you say; believe me he would sacrifice his life to take yours. Let me advise you to go to England. It is really your duty to do so. They may not be so badly off at the chateau as you imagine. Young Julian Arden is a fine high-spirited fellow; he will watch over their safety."

"I will take your advice, O'Loughlin," said our hero, gloomily, "because, as you say, it is my duty to do so, and to serve my country as long as this war lasts; but I shall do so with a heavy heart."

"I can imagine that such will be your feelings," said O'Loughlin, "but I really do not think this war will last long. France is no

longer in the state it was: the people and their rulers are wearied of their bloody deeds. There is no danger of life to Madame Coulancourt; the worst that can happen will be confiscation of property; they will not imprison females for so trifling a crime as harbouring an Englishman, for they cannot convict them of attempting to escape; therefore do not look upon the gloomy side of the picture. As soon as day dawns we will set the 'Vengeance' to rights, and do you run her into Portsmouth. I will put young Burdett in command of the brig. She has a valuable cargo, and is a handsome craft, and will no doubt be taken into the service. Burdett has passed his examination and it will give him a lift."

To this arrangement Lieutenant Thornton consented with a sigh of regret, some very bitter thoughts troubling his mind.

The three vessels were hove to till morning, the friends determining to sit up the remainder of the night conversing.

It was yet night, when a man's voice was

heard hailing the ship. Lieutenant Pole called down to our hero to come up, as a small boat from the shore was hailing them.

Lieutenant Thornton sprung to his feet with eagerness, and ran up upon deck, followed by Captain O'Loughlin.

Our hero beheld a small boat with a man and boy in it pulling up alongside.

"Well, my man," said Lieutenant Thornton, addressing him, "Do you bring any message from the shore?"

"Yes, monsieur, to you, I think," said the man, "as well as I can see by this light; are you the English officer that was at Chateau Coulancourt."

"I am, my man," returned our hero, "jump on board."

"Pardon, monsieur, I cannot delay to do that, for it is a mere piece of luck my seeing your ship, for I could not venture further out in this crazy craft; here is a parcel and a letter from Monsieur Plessis. I must get back to the shore before daylight or I shall be suspected."

Lieutenant Thornton eagerly took the packet and the letter, and tossing his purse to the man, containing four or five pounds in French gold coins, he said:

"Keep that, mon ami; I wish I had more to give you. Tell Monsieur Plessis that we are all well here."

"Mercie, monsieur," said the man pocketing the purse, "I will be sure to tell him; and I wish you well. I am not injuring my country by serving the best mistress the poor of this country ever had," and without further delay he and the lad took to their oars and pulled in lustily for the shore.

"Come, this is fortunate, my dear friend," said Captain O'Loughlin, "you will no doubt gain some intelligence of those you are so anxious about."

"I trust I shall," said Lieutenant Thornton, "come with me to the cabin, Patrick, and I will tell you what Monsieur Jean Plessis says."

Retiring to the cabin our hero took the cov-

ering from the paper parcel, which was bulky and securely fastened, within which was a second bundle of papers carefully tied together, and on the top a letter addressed to himself. It was from Monsieur Plessis, and was as follows:

"Dear Sir,

"Enclosed you have all the papers relative to Mademoiselle Arden's birth, her mother's marriage, &c. I have not a moment to spare for explanation, but if you can keep off and on the harbour of Havre for six or eight days, I think I have a scheme for escape planned that will succeed. Keep a sharp look out for a chasse-mare, that will carry a red flag hoisted on her foremast. If in eight days you do not fall in with such, you may conclude I have failed. Still be under no apprehension, for I have a powerful friend in Monsieur Barras, the director, and madame and family will be safe, though perhaps her fortune may suffer. The papers enclosed will establish Mademoiselle's and Monsieur Julian's claims to any property by

will or otherwise. I write in extreme haste and uncertainty, for even now I hear the guns in the creek, pealing each moment in the air, and I am aware that a desperate contest is taking place, but I can and have anticipated the result.

"Yours devotedly,

"JEAN PLESSIS."

"Be the immortal powers," said Captain O'Loughlin, "that Jean Plessis is a trump. He anticipated the result of the contest, you see; he knew we should succeed, and he prepared this letter."

"What's to be done," said Lieutenant Thornton, looking up anxiously, "for I know you cannot stay on this coast so long. You are already several days over your time."

"I think we can manage it very easily," said O'Loughlin. "I must sail and join Colpoys as directed; but I can put the 'Vengeance' to rights in four hours; and leave you fifteen men and young Burdett. Four men and the second mate

will run the brig to Portsmouth easily enough. There's not a craft on the coast can come near the 'Vengeance' for speed; her bottom has not been injured, and she spreads more canvass now than before. If Vice-Admiral Colpoys is still off Isle Dieu I shall be able, on stating the circumstances, to get leave to return and render you any aid you may require; I can be back, if no untoward event occurs in three days."

"Nothing can be better," said Lieutenant Thornton, joyfully. "The 'Vengeance' has some of her guns on board, but no stores."

"Never mind that, I can give you plenty; we have only to step your mizen-mast, and put you some ammunition and provisions on board, and you will do famously. If Jean Plessis fails, which I trust he will not, you must sail for England, report yourself and you will be made a commander, mark my words. This success in cutting out the 'Vengeance' will make a noise. I will just give orders to run further off the coast, so that our proceedings may not be observed."

On ascending upon deck, they perceived that it would soon be dawn, with a fresh breeze off shore, so making a signal to the "Vengeance" and the brig, they stood out to sea, and just as the sun rose they were beyond observation from the land.

Sending a party of men on board the "Vengeance," Captain O'Loughlin and our hero followed. The brig, with the second mate and four men, in half-an-hour was under weigh for Portsmouth, and young Burdett remained with our hero.

On examining the "Vengeance" in the broad daylight, they were surprised at her size and accommodation. She was nearly as long as the corvette with more beam in proportion. They could perceive by the new work where the fire had ceased its ravages. She had suffered more in her spars and rigging and sails than in her hull. Her cabin was large and fitted up for hard service, more attention being paid to its affording accommodation to the numerous officers generally on board privateers, all messing together, than

with any pretensions to elegance; the main cabin was the principal store room, it was at this time full of odds and ends; ropes, blocks, muskets, pistols, pikes, and every kind of privateering material, all in confusion. She was above two hundred tons burden, and carried immense spars.

In three hours every thing was altered; the mizen mast was stepped, the disordered and bloody deck washed, the rigging set up, and the cabin put into ship shape, two eight-pounders, and two long eighteen-pound caronades were placed ready for service; the rest of her guns were in her hold, and there they were left, fifteen men being too few to work any more than were on deck. After a few more arrangements had been completed, and the two friends had finally matured their plans, Master Burdett came on board with Bill Saunders, who was to be first mate, gunner, and to fill several other situations besides, the Commander of the "Onyx" bade his old comrade and friend farewell.

"If we do not again encounter here, we shall I trust meet ere long in England. My time will

be soon up; so, dear friend, farewell, and God send you may fall in with those you are so deeply anxious about!"

Charles Pole had also come to bid good-bye, and the three friends parted.

The "Onyx," under every stitch of canvass she could carry, stood away to the westward, whilst the "Vengeance" remained hove to, the crew busily employed settling and arranging their stores, ammunition, &c., and with her Commander, making themselves as comfortable as possible. There was no happier man on board than Bill Saunders. The two eighteen-pound carronades became his special favourites, and his first object was to get them into effective operation, should they be wanted, and to select his men to work them.

He besides considered himself a kind of cabin attendant, steward, and butler, and entered into several arrangements with Master Burdett, who seemed to be a favourite of his, as to the future victualling department.

CHAPTER VII.

LEAVING the "Vengeance" to keep watch off the Port of Havre, a thing at that period not at all a hazardous affair, whilst Vice-Admiral Colpoys was with his fleet off Brest or Isle Dieu, and few if any French vessels of war shewed out of their harbours, we return to Chateau Coulancourt.

Rather more than an hour after the departure of our hero and Bill Saunders for Lyon Head, Jean Plessis returned from Havre, looking anxious and thoughtful as he proceeded towards that part of the chateau inhabited by Madame Coulancourt and her daughter, and entered the

saloon where he found mother, son, and daughter, and his own daughter, all conversing earnestly upon their intended plan of escape.

"Where is Monsieur Thornton?" enquired Jean Plessis, looking at Julian, who was nursing his leg on a chair, in a state of great vexation at not having been able to accompany his friend.

"He went to the sand hills and Lyon Head," replied Julian. "This stupid leg of mine keeps me here. Have you heard anything alarming, Monsieur Plessis, or that annoys you; you look very thoughtful?"

Mabel turned her eloquent eyes anxiously upon the Intendant, as he answered:

"Why, yes. I have heard intelligence that makes me wish Monsieur Thornton had not gone out to-day. I will send Joseph, the gardener's grandson, this minute after him, to tell him to come back."

"What alarms you, Monsieur Plessis?" said Mabel. "Mon dieu! I hope nothing serious—"

"Nay," interrupted the Intendant, soothingly. "I do not feel alarmed at all, but merely

anxious to let Monsieur Thornton know what I heard to-day, and to put him on his guard. I was told when in Havre that an English frigate or corvette was seen close in with the coast off Lyon Head this morning, and that some days before a very fine armed brig was chased by that vessel, but that, aided by a thick fog, the brig got into Palos Creek, and was at anchor in the pool, where the 'Vengeance' lies. Ten or twelve of the coast-guard had at once set out for Lyon Head, at the instigation of some person residing with Monsieur Gramont who is at Rouen, and thirty or forty men belonging to an infantry regiment were to march for Palos Creek, to protect the 'Vengeance' and the brig, should this frigate discover them to be within the creek. It would be just as well that Monsieur Thornton did not meet or fall in with the coast-guard."

"Then do not lose a moment," cried both mother and daughter, anxiously, "in sending Joseph; he can run through the village which is a mile shorter, and probably overtake him."

"Deuce take my leg I was going to say!"

said Julian, with a flush on his cheek from vexation, "but I mean deuce take the stone that caused me to sprain my ankle. Now that I might be of service I'm no more use than an old woman!"

"But old women are sometimes very useful, Monsieur Julian," returned Julia, with a smile and a look at the handsome speaker, trying to rouse the mother and daughter from their sombre thoughts.

"I perfectly agree with you, Mademoiselle," answered Julian. "So they are, provided they are not guardians to very pretty grand-daughters, then they are no longer old women, but dragons. Ah, here is your father again. You have dispatched Joseph?"

"Yes, I made him take the post pony; he will go the quicker," replied the Intendant. "I have not mentioned my plans to you as yet, Madame," continued Jean Plessis, turning to the Duchess, "because I was not quite certain I could carry them out, but now I think I can effect what we wish."

"I felt certain," observed Madame Coulancourt, in reply, "that you were planning something, by your frequent visits to Havre."

"Yes, Madame, you have conjectured correctly. It will not do to remain too long here whilst Monsieur Gramont is, with his spies watching our movements."

"Spies!" repeated Julian; "then you suspect this Gramont is watching us?"

"Yes, Monsieur Julian, I do. There is a very suspicious person residing in his chateau—a most repulsive-looking man, I am told—and I know very well that Monsieur Gramont's bland manner and specious speeches are not to be depended on."

"I always said so," exclaimed Mabel, her eyes sparkling; "I detest that man."

"What have you been about at Havre, Jean?" enquired Madame Coulancourt.

"Suspecting something might occur that no one could foresee, I wrote to Monsieur Barras, telling him that, for certain reasons, Madame wished to return to Paris, with Mademoiselle de

Tourville, and I requested him to send me a written order, signed by Fouché, that she and her party should be permitted to proceed to Paris in whatever way she pleased. I received an answer to this effect: 'Madame Coulancourt shall have a protection, signed by Fouché and myself, so that no person will dare, after seeing that order, to molest her or the persons with her; but money is scarce, and, between ourselves, Fouché requires his pen to be gilded—send an order for twenty thousand francs, and you will have the safe-conduct back by your messenger.'"

"What a despicable character," cried Julian, indignantly, "for a ruler of France."

"True," returned Jean Plessis, "but at this moment, if Barras was not one of the three directors, it might be embarrassing to your mother. I did not consult you, Madame," continued Jean Plessis, looking at the ex-Duchess.

"There was no need, my kind friend," returned Madame Coulancourt; "you sent the money of course?"

"I sent an order, Madame, for the sum by a trusty messenger, yesterday; and now I will unfold to you my plans, which may readily be combined with those of Monsieur Thornton. With a passport signed by Barras and Fouché, no one dares obstruct us. I have engaged the Captain of a fast-sailing chasse-mare—he is a smuggler, I confess, but that does not matter—who is apparently to take us to Rouen. We shall sail in the day as if for Rouen, and when some miles up the river, he will come to an anchor. In the night he will up anchor, and drop down with the tide and put to sea; and, if this English vessel of war is the one Monsieur Thornton expects, the smuggler will place us all on board; if not, he engages to land us safely on the coast of England."

"This is an admirable idea," said Julian, "but how shall we manage—that is, Lieutenant Thornton and myself."

"That is easily arranged. You will go on, to a place I will fix upon, before us, and there we will pick you up. As Philip de Tourville,

your cousin will, of course, be included in the passport."

Some further conversation then ensued, and time passed on, till Mabel became anxious concerning the return of Lieutenant Thornton. It was getting late, when Julia beheld Joseph galloping the pony up the avenue leading to the back of the chateau.

"There is Joseph, and seemingly in a hurry," she exclaimed, running out to hear the news, her father and Julian hastily following. The boy had just dismounted in the yard; his face was flushed, and his manner quite excited.

"Well, boy," asked Monsieur Plessis, "did you see Monsieur de Tourville?"

"Oui, Monsieur, I did," said the lad, "but I arrived near the head only time enough to behold a party of the coast-guard running down the side; getting off the pony, I hastened to the edge of the cliff to see what the men were running after, and then, all of a sudden, I heard a cannon, and then musket shots, and, by the time I got to a place to see what was going on,

the coast-guard were running away, dragging a wounded man with them; and below I saw a boat with several persons in it, and I recognised Monsieur de Tourville's man; and off at sea, about a mile, I saw a large ship. I watched the boat, and saw them pull out to the ship, and then, as I could see or do nothing more, I returned to you as fast as I could."

Julian Arden and Julia had listened to this account of the lad with both surprise and alarm, and then the latter ran to let Mabel and Madame Coulancourt know that, at all events, Lieutenant Thornton and Bill had got safe on board the corvette. Luckily, the lad had not seen Bill carrying the insensible body of his master, therefore Mabel's feelings were spared much anxiety.

"Oh," exclaimed mother and daughter, "what an escape! Then they actually fired upon them; this proves they were watched, and suspected of having communication with the English vessel of war. Who knows what may be the consequence of this untoward affair?"

Anxious to hear what Jean Plessis thought of this event, they proceeded to the saloon. The Intendant was himself disturbed; he had questioned the boy minutely, and he allowed he did not recognise Monsieur de Tourville in the boat, but he was certain he saw Bill, or, as he called him, Pierre Bompart. All the sailors in the boat wore white trousers, short jackets, and glazed hats, therefore he could clearly distinguish the tall figure of Bill.

Jean Plessis was puzzled; if Bill got safe into the boat, surely so did Lieutenant Thornton; then he suddenly recollected the man the coast-guard men were carrying. "Did you see the wounded man?" he demanded.

"Yes," returned Joseph, "the wounded man was the gentleman who lives with Monsieur Gramont. I am sure of that, for I saw his long beard and great bushy eyebrows."

This assertion relieved Monsieur Plessis's anxiety with respect to the safety of Lieut. Thornton, who, amongst the crew in the boat, he supposed, escaped the boy's notice. Still it proved to him

that Philip de Tourville was discovered to be an Englishman; Julian had better, therefore, get out of the way, for fear of a search for him.

"This is a most unfortunate affair, Jean," said Madame Coulancourt, as the Intendant entered the saloon, looking serious and perplexed.

"It is unfortunate, Madame," replied Monsieur Plessis, "so far as it may draw on us the attention of Monsieur Gramont, who is expected home to-day, to the chateau; but it is fortunate that Lieutenant Thornton has escaped."

"But," said Mabel, eagerly, "suppose he attempts to land again; his life would be endangered."

"He will not attempt to do that, depend upon it, Mademoiselle, after the escape he had; but I think it not at all unlikely that, this night, the crew of the corvette will attempt to sink or burn the 'Vengeance' and the brig, in Palos pool. They cannot cut the former out, for I understand she can be fastened by an immense chain to a huge anchor, if they think any danger is to be apprehended."

"Will any suspicion be attached to us, do you think, Jean?"

"It's very possible Monsieur Gramont may pay us a visit, Madame," answered the Intendant, thoughtfully, "therefore I really think if Monsieur Julian was to go to Dulong, where he could remain, or cross over to the village on the other side, and wait till we came up the river, it would be better."

"I can easily do that in my assumed name of Louis Lebeau," returned Julian; "but is there any need for my separating from those I would fain stay to protect?"

"My dear boy," said the anxious mother, "having once more pressed you to my heart, let me not have the agony of again losing you. You could not render us the slightest service. When this passport has arrived from Monsieur Barras we may consider ourselves safe from this Monsieur Gramont, whose design is, I am sure, to possess himself of Coulancourt by exciting suspicion against me."

"If I had an opportunity, and I found him

plotting against your happiness, or seeking to betray you into the hands of the Government, I would put a pistol to his head," exclaimed Julian, with impetuosity.

"Do not be rash, dear Julian," said Mabel, putting her arm round her brother's neck, "far better leave us to the care of good Monsieur Plessis, who has hitherto protected us with such marvellous devotedness and courage. Suppose suspicion is excited, and they send to search the chateau, what a terrible blow it would be to us all to see you arrested, carried off, and imprisoned. You must spare us that sorrow, dear Julian."

"God knows, dear Mabel, I should think little of life, if, by sacrificing it, I ensured my beloved mother and you a certainty of happiness and safety."

"Then suppose you proceed to Dulong at once on the pony," said Jean Plessis. "If this alarm passes off, in two or three days at the furthest we shall be ready to embark in the Chasse-Mare for Rouen. I can say Madame prefers going as

far as possible towards Paris by water, on account of that affair of the robbers, which frightened her from travelling that road again, especially as the country is really said to be infested with robbers.

"Well, though it grieves me to leave you both," said Julian, "I will as soon as it is dusk, set off for Dulong. Joseph will bring back the pony and let me know then how things go on, and whether they succeed in burning the 'Vengeance;' I feel sure Thornton will make the attempt."

Mabel's cheeks grew pale; she did not like to believe in the cutting-out business, though she probably felt it was just the kind of adventure her lover would like, especially against the 'Vengeance,' having heard him often say: "If I could only destroy that craft I should feel great satisfaction; her brute of a Captain richly deserves punishment, but on account of his relationship to Dame Moret I should do all I could to preserve his life."

Julian Arden, seeing it would make his

mother's and sister's minds easy, determined to proceed to Dulong for the night. He therefore, after an affectionate leave-taking, mounted the pony, taking Joseph for a guide.

It was well he did so, for scarcely an hour after his departure the inhabitants of the chateau were alarmed by hearing the tramp of horses' feet, both at the front and back of the mansion. It was Sergeant Perrin with twelve mounted gendarmes.

"Ah! my beloved child," said Madame Coulancourt, "I thought this affair would not pass off so easily. Thank God, Julian has got out of the way! Had he stayed he would have been arrested."

Whilst mother and daughter, and Julia Plessis were waiting in anxious suspense, Jean Plessis followed by Sergeant François Perrin, entered the room.

"Sorry to disturb you, madame," said the sergeant civilly, "I am only obeying the orders of Monsieur le Maire. At the same time he has requested me to say that you need not be

under any alarm, as he has no intention of disturbing you or your family. My orders are to search the chateau for a person calling himself Louis Lebeau, who has been traced to this mansion. There is every reason to believe that this Louis Lebeau is an Englishman and a spy, and my orders are to arrest him and to place a guard round this house during the night."

Though Madame Coulancourt knew she was very pale, she replied calmly:

"You are at perfect liberty to search the chateau, Monsieur le Sergeant."

The sergeant bowed.

"May I request, madame, to see this young lady's brother, Monsieur Phillip De Tourville."

Madame Coulancourt and Mabel looked at each other, and then at Jean Plessis, with a feeling of intense vexation and dismay; but Monsieur Plessis very quietly said:

"You should have come yesterday, Sergeant Perrin; Monsieur De Tourville is gone, and we intend in a day or two to proceed, by water as

far as madame can conveniently travel, on our way to Paris."

"Oh! Monsieur De Tourville is gone, is he?" said Sergeant Perrin, without a change of countenance, "I was only desired to enquire if he was at the chateau. Did he take that worthy man Pierre Bompart with him?"

"Certainly," returned Monsieur Plessis.

"Would you wish to refresh yourself and men, sergeant, after your long ride?"

"I shall have no objection," said the sergeant civilly, "and if madame will order a chamber for the use of myself and men for the night, I shall feel obliged; it is not my wish or that of Monsieur le Maire to put the family to any inconvenience. No doubt in the morning Monsieur Gramont will have the pleasure of visiting madame himself, and set all things to rights."

So saying, Sergeant Perrin followed Monsieur Plessis and Julia from the chamber.

For a moment mother and daughter sat without uttering a word, each busy with her own thoughts. Mabel was thinking what a lucky

escape her brother and lover had had; and Madame Coulancourt was reflecting upon the many sorrows she had experienced; and dismayed at the thought of the trials apparently before her.

"How very fortunate and providential," said Mabel, coming close to her mother's side, and taking her hand in hers with fond affection, "that our dear Julian got away before these horrid men came to look for him."

There were tears in the mother's eyes, as she bent down and kissed the pale cheek of her loving child.

"I could wish, my beloved girl," said madame, "that you had remained in happy England, great as has been my delight, in pressing you to my heart after years of separation. Yet I would that you were there, and not exposed to the chances of detection."

"Dear, dear mother," interrupted Mabel earnestly and fondly, "why regret that which has given so much happiness to me. My life would have been miserable when once I knew the possi-

bility of rejoining you. I fear neither captivity nor privation; I have but one wish—to live and die with you."

"And where is poor William to look for consolation," said the mother, parting the hair from her daughter's fair brow as it rested on her shoulder; "is there not a little nook in that fond heart that beats in unison with his. Does no thought of his agony, if he thought you were torn from him for ever, touch your heart?"

"Ah! dear William," said the fair girl, her cheeks glowing and her heart throbbing with the excitement of her feelings, "dear William knows all the love that woman can give to the object of her heart's choice is given to him, but there is no selfish feeling in his noble soul. He is quite as capable of sacrificing all the fondest wishes of his heart, if thereby he could secure your safety and happiness."

"I know it, Mabel; a strong conviction of confidence and affection stole over me the very first time I looked into his fine youthful features. I confided you to his care with a feeling of trust

and security, that though young as he was, he would risk life to fulfil the confidence reposed in him, and nobly and faithfully he followed up his word."

"I cannot retire to rest to night," said Mabel, "I feel such a painful anxiety respecting the attempt that may be made to destroy that detestable 'Vengeance.' If there was any firing in Palos Creek we should hear it here distinctly, should we not?"

"Yes, on a fine night like this," said Madame Coulancourt.

Just then Julia entered.

"What have you done, dear Julia," said Madame Coulancourt, "with our troublesome guests?"

"Eh! mon Dieu! they are troublesome," said Julia. "They have posted sentinels within twenty yards of each other round the chateau, whilst the sergeant and the rest who will relieve the guard, have settled themselves and their weapons in the lower hall. I have ordered them refreshments. Sergeant Perrin is very polite

and agreeable, and by no means taciturn. He says there are forty or fifty men besides coast guards gone down to Palos Creek to watch lest an attempt should be made on the 'Vengeance.' They would have taken her up the creek to Grantain, but it is low neap tides, and she draws too much water; so they have chained her to a huge anchor, nearly two tons weight and riveted the chains. Captain Pierre Gaudet swears he will burn or blow her up before the English shall have her."

"Ah?" said Mabel, her cheeks flushing, though she shuddered as she spoke, "if William is determined to take her he will do so; but I trust in God he will not attempt it, for many lives must be lost, I dread to think it, on both sides."

CHAPTER VIII.

NEITHER Mabel nor Madame Coulancourt, when they retired to rest that night, undressed, for they fully expected to be roused by the sounds of contention from Palos Creek. Mabel remained with her mother, and both leaving their lamp burning, lay down as they were. Just before midnight the loud dull sound of a heavy gun in the direction of the Creek, caused both ladies to jump up and listen; they threw up their window which looked in the direction of the firing, and then came plainly enough the sounds of discharges of musketry, and the loud boom of the 12-pound carronade.

"Oh, Heavens! how quick the discharges of musketry are," said Mabel, trembling all over; "what a terrible fight they must have!"

"Oh! God protect those we love!" fervently uttered both mother and daughter; "and inspire them with mercy to their enemies. It's frightful to think of men defacing God's own image by slaying each other, and without one real feeling of individual animosity."

"Ah, mother! rulers of states have a terrible responsibility to answer for, when they arm their poor subjects to slay and destroy other human beings, from some paltry political feeling. There goes the great gun again!"

A knock at the door interrupted the conversation,

"'Tis I, Mabel," said the voice of Julia.

Mabel ran and opened the door, Julia was dressed.

"Mon Dieu!" said Mademoiselle Plessis, "what firing down at the Creek; my father has been writing this half hour. Sergeant Perrin has gone down to the sea-shore, he could not resist;

he has left only two men on guard. My father is sure they will either cut out the ships or burn them; if they burn them we shall see the glare in the heavens. My father is going to an old fisherman, who would risk his life for him, to get him to take out a letter and a packet of important papers to give Lieutenant Thornton, in which he has stated his plan of escape, so that the Lieutenant may co-operate if practicable. The old fisherman will steal out in his boat, and if possible deliver the packet; if not he will bring it safe back. To-morrow my father will make you fully acquainted with what he has done. He has gone out by a door, left unguarded by the departure of the men, and will bring us back word how the contest ends."

It was, in truth, a night of deep anxiety to all, and not till long after the firing had ceased did any of the inhabitants of the Chateau retire to rest. Monsieur Plessis, however, returned before Sergeant Perrin.

In the morning as the family re-assembled at breakfast, jaded with the watching and anxiety

of the past night, Julia informed the mother and daughter that the 'Vengeance' and the brig had been both carried off by the English, after a desperate resistance. That there were nine or ten killed on board and on shore, of the crew of the 'Vengeance' and amongst the soldiers. Captain Gaudet was not hurt, but furious and frantic at the loss of the vessel, which he imputed to the conduct of the soldiers and the cowardice of the captain of the brig, attempting to run out instead of anchoring his vessel with her broadside to the entrance, and firing into the boats as they came up. My father heard that one or two of the English had been killed and some wounded, but no officer hurt; that the fisherman had delivered his letter and the packet into the hands of Lieutenant Thornton himself, who bade him say all were well."

A glow spread over the pale cheek of Mabel at this intelligence, though she deeply mourned the loss of life.

"Where is your father, Julia?" demanded Madame Coulancourt anxiously.

"He and my mother went early in the calash to Havre. He expects his messenger to-day from Paris by the mail post, and my mother went with him to make some necessary arrangements. They will be back in the evening, and the day after to-morrow he thinks we may leave Coulancourt."

"God grant it!" said the mother.

"What did Sergeant Perrin do down at the Creek last night, did you hear him speak about it, Julia?"

"For a wonder, Madame, he did not say a word, and seems very sulky. They are all sorely vexed at the cutting out of the 'Vengeance.' I am going directly to Dame Moret, and very probably I shall see her son, and he surely will be able to tell us all the particulars, for the English did not touch or injure the fishing luggers, but put all the prisoners and wounded into them. I overheard one of the gendarmes saying to Sergeant Perrin, that the English crew and their leader that boarded the 'Vengeance,' under a frightful fire from on board and on shore,

were diables. That they were only about fifteen or sixteen men at first, that they cut down all before them, and that their leader—Lieutenant Thornton I fancy—burst through all opposition and seized Captain Gaudet, who would otherwise have perished, and dragged him off, throwing him into the boats alongside, so that he might swim ashore or get on board the nearest boat."

"That officer was surely our own dear friend," said Mabel, "he said if ever he captured the 'Vengeance' he would spare Captain Gaudet, though he did treat him and Bill Saunders most cruelly."

"We may expect this Monsieur Gramont here to-day," said Madame Coulancourt.

"Yes, Madame," said Julia, "so Sergeant Perrin tells me."

"Then I will take very good care to keep out of his way," said Mabel, "for I am sure it is owing to his schemes that we have been molested."

Leaving the inmates of Chateau Coulancourt

in a rather troubled and apprehensive state of mind, we beg our readers to follow us into an apartment of the mansion inhabited by Monsieur Gramont.

Stretched on a bed in a remote chamber of the house lay Augustine Vadier; his right eye had been knocked out by a splinter of rock, and although the piece had been extracted and the wound bound up by a surgeon from Havre, the eye was gone for ever, and there was considerable danger from inflammation. Notwithstanding this severe visitation and suffering, Augustine Vadier showed no kind of remorse for his past crimes, or evinced any symptoms of regret; on the contrary, his passion and vexation at being the only one wounded, and the escape of the person he intended to entrap, rendered the fever much worse.

"Has Monsieur Gramont arrived?" demanded Vadier of the sulky domestic that attended to his wants.

"He has not," returned the man, "but he will be here before mid-day; he slept at Havre."

"So those sacre Anglais have cut out the vessels in Palos Creek," muttered Vadier with a smothered execration, "this would not have occurred if that lazy rascal, the coast-guard, had followed my directions. We should have entrapped that English spy, who was here amongst those traitors at the Chateau Coulancourt, for the purpose of prying into the situation of the 'Vengeance.' If, instead of watching the movements of the corvette, they had posted themselves on the sand hills, they would have secured them all. Curse them! I am the only sufferer."

"Wouldn't care if they had settled you out and out," muttered the man to himself. "Ah! there is Monsieur Gramont riding into the yard."

"Prop me up with pillows," said the sick man, "for he will be with me directly."

The domestic did so, grumbling at having an office put upon him, that an old woman would have done better.

"Yes, rascal," exclaimed the irritated invalid, "le diable, for that matter, would do better than

you, thankless scoundrel; your master shall hear of your insolence."

"I don't care who hears of it," said the man, walking away. "You promised me five hundred francs for making Dedan a spy on her mistress, where are they?"

A few minutes afterwards Bertram Gramont, in his riding dress, entered the chamber, closing the door after him.

"Here's a pretty mess you have got yourself into," said the Maire, throwing himself into a chair by the bedside. "Did I not tell you to take things quietly till my return, and now here you are with your eye knocked out, and worse, our prey escaped, when I have an order from Fouché, the Minister of Police, to arrest the whole party, and send them prisoners to Paris. I may almost consider the Coulancourt estate as mine."

"I acted for the best," growled Augustine Vadier; "that cursed Englishman, Lieutenant Thornton, who is the very same who had the care of the casket in Toulon, was preparing to

escape with that other Englishman living under the name of Lebeau. Who he is I cannot imagine, Madame Coulancourt has had him concealed in the chateau, and I was told was seen embracing him."

"The diable!" interrupted Bertram Gramont, with a start. "Not a lover surely at her age, and with such a youth; are you sure of this, Vadier? I really am sorry to hear that you will lose the sight of your eye."

"Lose the sight! Curse it man, it's knocked clean out," exclaimed Vadier; "but if I can get on my legs soon, I will manage with the other. I am sure of what I say," continued the wounded man. "They little suspect that their servant girl, one of old Dame Moret's farm domestics, is a spy upon them."

"What induced you to attempt to entrap this Englishman before my return," asked Monsieur Gramont.

"Because I found out that this Lieutenant Thornton and this Louis Lebeau, whose christian name is, however, Julian—"

"Julian! Julian!" repeated Bertram Gramont, with a start. "By the saints, I have it! No, no, he's no lover. Julian! Yes, that's the name of Madame Coulancourt's son, supposed to have been killed amongst the good people of Lyons at the time d'Herbois shot them down like rooks. I trust Sergeant Perrin has secured him at all events."

"Not he; that cursed Jean Plessis is too wide awake for that. He's gone—where, I can't say —but he left the chateau on a pony last night with a boy called Joseph."

"Then he will be easily traced, so all is right there. How did you contrive to get this girl to betray the secrets of a mistress so well loved as Madame Coulancourt? I suppose you made love to her."

"Not such a fool as that," muttered Vadier. "You can never lay aside your jokes, not even when your deepest interests are concerned."

"Possibly not, mon ami," returned Monsieur Le Maire, with a laugh, "it's not very long ago

since it was the fashion to bandy bon mots with the executioner, when he was adjusting your head for that interesting receptacle, the box under the guillotine. However, you see," continued Monsieur Gramont, "one of the consequences of your interfering is that this Lieut. Thornton, who was one of those who failed in cutting out the 'Vengeance' in Havre Roads, tried it again last night, and, by Jove, he has got her, and the Hermaphrodite armed brig, of Bourdeaux, with a valuable cargo. If you had left him alone till my return this would have been prevented."

"How so?" returned Vadier. "I do not see that; for he and that pretended Pierre Bompart were evidently seeking to communicate with the corvette when I thought to entrap them."

"Yes, I admit that, mon ami; but they were not intending to go on board then. My idea is, and I am persuaded I am right, that they were merely communicating with the corvette, planning an escape for Madame Coulancourt and her daughter; so my return with the order for the

arrest of the whole party would have struck a fatal blow to their projects, and saved both the 'Vengeance' and the brig."

"And what do you intend doing now?" demanded Vadier. "I have the false deeds quite ready, and the late duke's signatures, &c., all complete."

"I am going now—at least in half-an-hour—to the chateau; Sergeant Perrin went there last night by my orders, to keep watch. I will make a proposal to Madame Coulancourt, which if she does not accept, I will enforce the order for their arrest, and send them to Paris. She must be found guilty of plotting with the enemies of France, and by the by, this affair of the 'Vengeance' will, after all, implicate her most forcibly, as she permitted an English officer to reside in her mansion, under an assumed name, and passed off her own daughter as a Mademoiselle de Tourville. I think, Augustine, I have a good head for plotting. Once convicted of this charge, which she cannot possibly refute, her estate will be confiscated, and then I intend producing my

deeds and the late Duke's revocal of his former will; with the interest I possess when I shall, no doubt, be put in possession of the property. Strange to say I could not get Fouché to give me an order to arrest that confounded Jean Plessis. 'No,' said the Minister of Police, 'he is a protegé of Barras; let him alone.'"

"Curse him!" fiercely exclaimed Vadier. "Then I will stick a knife in him. I hate that man; he was the chief witness against me when I was condemned in Paris to the galleys. I'll have my revenge of him."

"Very proper," said Monsieur Gramont, "but get well first; you look feverish, and exciting yourself is bad."

"Humph," muttered Vadier. "I wish you would give me the five hundred francs for that rascal Dubois; he is growling like a bear, he wants to marry that girl Dedan, at the chateau, and she is getting frightened for fear of being found out."

"Confound the rascal, let him wait. I have not five hundred to spare, mon cher, just yet;

and as to the girl, serve her right if she is found out. We require neither of them now."

"Then send off that sulky rascal Dubois; he handles me as if I was a bear."

"Ma foi, with that hairy face of yours you are not unlike one," said Monsieur Gramont. "The time is past now, or else I would despatch the rascal to prison as a royalist, and have his head off. As it is I will send him about his business this moment—the easiest way of paying the five hundred francs. Now I must leave you; keep up your spirits, you will soon be on your legs; the loss of an eye will not spoil your beauty, and your other optic will gain redoubled force. I shall be back in the evening."

"Ah," muttered Augustine Vadier bitterly, sinking back on the bed, "thus it always is with tools; but take care, Monsieur Gramont, I am a dangerous tool to cast aside as worthless."

Monsieur Gramont was just the kind of man to neglect any one but himself. Selfish, heartless, and unprincipled, he felt for no one; he befriended the wretch Vadier, because he was a

most expert forger, and because he knew he knew a secret or two of his late father's, better hidden than disclosed. He wanted him no further, so he then thought, and in reality he was rather grieved that the splinter of the rock did not finish him entirely, instead of merely putting out his eye. Changing his dress, and making the most of his really handsome person, Bertram Gramont mounted his horse, and set out alone for Chateau Coulancourt.

CHAPTER IX.

On reaching the mansion, Monsieur Gramont's first interview was with Sergeant Perrin in the lower hall.

"So you missed seizing the person of Louis Lebeau," said the Maire to the Sergeant.

"Yes, Monsieur Gramont, we did; he was certainly not in the chateau, and you did not give us further instructions than to search the house, and keep a careful guard, which we did."

"Till you heard the firing, Sergeant, down at Palos creek, and then you left only two of the men to keep watch—eh, mon ami?"

"Well, Monsieur Le Maire, I thought I ought, under the circumstances, to see if we could be of any service in driving off those diables Anglais, but they had a heavy gun loaded with grape."

"Never mind, Sergeant; I am aware that grape is not easy of digestion, so you prudently retired."

"Non, ma foi, Monsieur, not till the 'Vengeance' was fairly out of the creek. The coast-guard would not face the gun, and three men were killed and a great many wounded amongst the soldiers."

"Bien, as that cannot be remedied, let us talk of what we have on hand; send one of your men for a lad called Joseph, belonging to this establishment."

In a few minutes one of the men returned with the gardener's grandson, who looked very frightened.

"Where did you go, my lad," enquired Monsieur Gramont, "yesterday evening, just after dusk?"

The boy looked all round him for help, he grew pale, and remained silent.

"Oh!" said Monsieur Gramont, "are you another dummy? Do you know, if you do not find your tongue I will find a most effectual restorer of speech."

A friend stepped into the chamber to the great relief of the culprit, with an easy unembarrassed countenance, and faced Monsieur Gramont, without flinching; this friend to Joseph was pretty Julia Plessis.

"You frighten the lad, Monsieur Gramont," said Julia, patting the boy's head; "don't be alarmed, Joseph, tell Monsieur le Maire that you did what you were told to do, and obeyed your mistress."

"I should be sorry, Mademoiselle," said Bertram Gramont, "to do anything displeasing to Madame Coulancourt. So I will let this lad go about his business, as it matters very little his confirmation of a fact. I am aware he went to guide or bring back a pony, one on which Louis Lebeau left this Chateau. Perhaps, Mademoi-

selle, you could tell me where the said Louis Lebeau went to."

"Really, Monsieur Gramont," returned Julia demurely, "you seem so very well informed of the movements of all here, that any information from me would be idle."

"Well, then, Mademoiselle, I will not trouble you, except with a message to Madame Coulancourt. Will you be so good as to say I shall feel gratified if she will favour me with an interview. I request this as a favour, not as a duty that I have to perform."

"Certainly, Monsieur Gramont," said Julia; "if you will please to come into the saloon I will inform Madame of your request."

"Is your father in the Chateau, Mademoiselle?" said Monsieur le Maire, as Julia ushered him into the principal saloon.

"No, Monsieur; he went early this morning to Havre," so saying she retired.

Monsieur Gramont stood facing the portrait of the late Duke de Coulancourt with a thoughtful and serious expression on his features; he was

not at all repenting the injustice he contemplated, far from it; but he was thinking, at the moment, that it was very possible that France might return at no distant time to a monarchical form of government, and if so, would it not be possible to gain the defunct title as well as the estate. Monsieur Gramont was fond of "castle building;" it is very pleasant at times, but, unfortunately, we are apt to be recalled rather suddenly and disagreeably to this dull earth and its sad realities. Monsieur Gramont was startled out of his day dreams by the entrance of Madame Coulancourt.

Now that it was come to the point to carry out his intended project, he felt somewhat embarrassed; there was a conscious dignity, a stately and impressive loftiness of character visible in every word and movement of the ex-Duchess de Coulancourt that had its effect upon him, and after the first formal words had passed and both were seated, it all at once struck the Maire, as he looked into the still beautiful and calm features of Madame Coulancourt,

that what he had to say was by no means so easily said as he had imagined. However, it was necessary to make a beginning, so after a little pause of embarrassment on the part of Monsieur Gramont, he said:

"A very unpleasant duty, Madame has fallen to my lot to execute."

"Then, Monsieur," said Madame, "the sooner an unpleasant duty is brought to a close the better; therefore pray do not hesitate, for suspense is often times more trying than the reality."

"True, Madame, so it is," returned Bertram Gramont, "I perfectly agree with you. You came, Madame, to this Chateau with a Mademoiselle de Tourville; her brother had been residing here before your arrival; indeed, I met that gentleman myself. It has reached the ears of Monsieur Fouché, the Minister of Police, that this Mademoiselle de Tourville is your own daughter, and that the person who represented her brother is an English naval officer."

Monsieur le Maire looked up into Madame's

countenance, but though pale, there was no alteration in its expression.

"Well, Monsieur Gramont," said Madame Coulancourt, "what is the consequence of this discovery of yours or Monsieur Fouché's?"

"It was my discovery, Madame," said Bertram Gramont, a little roused, "it was my bounden duty to have made it. However, as you request to know what may be the consequences, I must inform you that I have received an official order to arrest you and your daughter, and to send you both under escort to Paris, to answer to the charge of harbouring the enemies of the Republic in your Chateau, knowing them to be such. These, Madame, are my instructions," taking as he spoke from his pocket book a parchment, with a portentous looking seal on it, and the signature of Fouché, the future Duke of Otranto, affixed to it.

"I do not mean to doubt or dispute your instructions, Monsieur Gramont," replied Madame Coulancourt, with but a slight agitation of

manner, "and will reserve anything I may have to say till confronted with my accusers."

Rather disappointed in the degree of emotion betrayed by Mabel's mother, Bertram Gramont resolved to inflict a further blow on his intended victim.

"Besides this charge against you, Madame Coulancourt, which seems greatly increased by the events of last night, which will exasperate the Government beyond measure, I find that a young man calling himself Louis Lebeau has been secreted in this chateau for several days —is not this the case, madame?

"I deny nothing, monsieur," said Madame Coulancourt, calmly and coldly. "Pray let me know the extent of the accusations against me, and what it is your pleasure to do."

"Madame, you mistake my motives altogether," returned the gentleman, with a flushed cheek, for he was getting heated seeing the coolness of Madame Coulancourt. "It is not my pleasure to injure or disturb you or your

family, if possible to avoid it. I wish to show you your situation, and then propose a remedy. Therefore, with respect to the pretended Louis Lebeau, I am aware that he is your son, Julian Arden."

Madame Coulancourt at these words felt a pang shoot through her heart. She had no idea that any one could have betrayed that secret.

Monsieur Gramont exulted; he plainly perceived he had now laid his hand on a chord that vibrated to the touch. He perceived she felt no fear for herself and Mabel, but she dreaded, and with reason, her son's falling into the power of Fouché.

"Your son, madame, left the chateau yesterday evening with a boy named Joseph. Before this time he is safely arrested, and it remains with me to consign him to a prison, perhaps for years. He, you know, is an Englishman by birth, and I am aware and have proof of his interviews with Lieutenant Thornton, who is one of the most determined officers in the Navy of Eng-

land—and the same who, with Sir Sidney Smith, attempted to cut out the famous privateer, 'Vengeance,' and again last night did actually carry her and an armed brig off, in which act your son was to have been an accomplice."

This was in truth a severe trial for Madame Coulancourt: of all things she had dreaded her son's recognition, and his falling into the hands of her enemies. From his having served, though against his will, in the French naval service, and his desertion from it, which was quite natural, his sentence, if it depended on the Government, might be death.

Madame Coulancourt very plainly perceived that all the movements in the chateau were betrayed, that there was a concealed enemy amongst them or a bribed spy.

Seeing by madame's pale expressive features that his last, untrue assertion, had greatly alarmed her, inwardly exulting Gramont, observed with apparent calmness and kindness of tone:

"You see, madame, the position in which I

stand as Maire of this arrondissement. It is my bounden duty to preserve the district from the insidious and piratical designs of the English who infest our coast; destroying our ships even in our harbours; and the very men who commit these acts have been protected in this very chateau more than a month. What would be said of my conduct and vigilance if these facts were brought against me. On one condition I can release your son, allow his escape to England, and destroy the accusations against yourself; and, if you desire it, aid and ensure your own escape to England with your son."

"And what, Monsieur Gramont," said Madame Coulancourt eagerly, her heart beating with anxiety for her children, "what do you require of me for such services?"

"Plainly, then, madame, the hand of your daughter, Mabel Arden."

The astonished mother started from her chair with an agonized look; her lips pale with the agitation she experienced.

Before she could utter a word the door of

the adjoining room opened, and Mabel Arden entered the saloon, her beautiful features calm, and self-possessed, with her fine and graceful figure erect, she passed before the startled Monsieur Gramont, who instantly rose from his chair, making a confused salutation at the same time. The mother also looked at her daughter, for she was not aware that Mabel had been in the library.

"Monsieur Gramont," said Mabel looking him steadily and unflinchingly in the face, "I have heard every word of the artful and cowardly insinuations and threats with which you have assailed my beloved mother, creating a feeling of agony for the safety of her children, for the purpose of gaining your own ends."

"Mademoiselle," interrupted Bertram Gramont, his face flushed with suppressed rage, and excited by the look of scorn and detestation that Mabel made no effort to conceal, "you are severe, and unjust. Admiration of your beauty—"

"Monsieur," hastily interrupted Mabel, "let

us end this scene, and take your answer from me. To save my mother or my brother's life I would sacrifice my own at any time. But none of their lives are at all endangered, and your assertion of my brother's arrest is false. But supposing all that you have said to be true, in answer to your proposal of uniting your destiny to mine, I now tell you, that sooner than do so, I would cheerfully submit to lay my head beneath the axe."

There were tears in the mother's eyes, as Mabel turned to her and threw her arms round her neck, and said:

"Dear mother, do not give way to fear or agitation; the same Providence that has hitherto protected and shielded us, will not now desert us. We have braved greater dangers than this. The monsters that disgraced this ill-starred land no longer exist; we shall have justice, and whatever our doom may be, we shall still be together."

"Very well, mademoiselle," said Bertram Gramont, giving way to his passion, "so you

despise and scorn me. I will now prove to you that your words are nought, and that you may yet sue for that which you have despised."

He was turning to the door, when it opened and Monsieur Plessis entered the room. He and his wife had a few minutes before returned from Havre.

Monsieur Gramont paused and so did Jean Plessis.

After civilly saluting the Maire he said:

"How is it that I see Madame Coulancourt weeping; has anything occurred to distress you, madame?"

"Monsieur Plessis," said Bertram Gramont, "you appear to me to be blessed, not only with immense assurance, but also to have a happy knack of keeping your head upon your shoulders. Now, it appears to me this time you have placed it in jeopardy."

"Pardon, Monsieur le Maire," interrupted Jean Plessis with a smile, "you must be joking. For years I never felt my head so safe as at this

moment. I wished much to see you to speak on the subject of the attempt made to rob me on my journey here."

Monsieur Gramont visibly started, and at once fiercely said:

"What do you mean, sir; what have I to do with that affair? It was investigated, as far as it was in my power, at the time."

"True, monsieur," returned Jean Plessis calmly, "but I have this day learned that one of the robbers is actually in your chateau, lying wounded; his eye being knocked out by a splinter of rock, in the affair on Lyon Point."

Bertram Gramont grew livid with rage.

"Where did you pick up that infamous lie? You forget Jean Plessis, to whom you are talking. Where, I say, did you hear this falsehood?"

"This is no place, Monsieur, neither must Madame Coulancourt be incommoded by our controversy on this subject; I will attend you in another chamber."

"Let it be understood, Monsieur Plessis," returned the Maire, making an effort to regain his composure, "that Madame Coulancourt and her daughter are under arrest, and from this moment I forbid all communication with any person from without. Sergeant Perrin and his men must be answerable to me for their safe guardianship, as they shall be escorted to Paris to-morrow."

"By whose orders, Monsieur Gramont," enquired Jean Plessis, "is this harsh measure put in force?"

"I do not see that I am bound to enlighten you, Monsieur Plessis," said the Maire with a sneer. "However, you will, I suppose, acknowledge this authority," and he opened his pocket book, and displayed the order of arrest, signed by Fouché.

Jean Plessis looked at the already much dreaded signature of Fouché very calmly.

"Ah!" said he, "I see, this is dated the 16th of June."

"Well," said Bertram Gramont impatiently;

"what has that to do with the validity of the document?"

"Nothing whatever, Monsieur," returned Jean Plessis; "if it had been executed after the twenty-first. But," taking a very large memorandum book from his pocket, opening it, and selecting a document very similar to the one held by Monsieur Gramont, "here is an order, signed not only by Monsieur Fouché, but by the most powerful and influential of the Directors of France —Monsiur Barras; it is as recent as the twenty-second, and if you will cast your eye over it you will perceive it cancels all previous documents, and especially directs the various authorities here, and on the road to Paris, to shew particular attention to Madame Coulancourt, and her daughter Mademoiselle Arden."

Bertram Gramont fell back perfectly annihilated, whilst Mabel, kissing her mother's cheek, exclaimed:

"Did I not say, dear mother, that a beneficent Providence would yet shield us from the evil designs of our enemies!"

Bertram Gramont bit his lip, and with a look of rage and vexation at Mabel, turned and left the room, saying to Jean Plessis:

"I have not done with you yet, Monsieur, follow me into another apartment."

"This way then, Monsieur le Maire," said the Intendant, passing along the corridor, and throwing open the door of the small saloon into which our hero was first shewn when he entered the Chateau Coulancourt.

"I see through your designs, Monsieur Plessis," cried Bertram Gramont, slamming the door after him as they entered the room, "you think you can elude justice, and purchase permission to become a traitor."

"Take care, Bertram Gramont," said Jean Plessis sternly, "how you accuse Monsieur Barras of such a crime."

"Who dares say I accused Monsieur Barras?" hastily interrupted the Maire, turning pale, for in his passion he had allowed his thoughts utterance, and he well knew what a terrible power the said Monsieur Barras wielded. "I did

not speak of anyone in particular; I knew you to have harboured enemies to your country. You cannot deny but that you knew that an English officer and one of his men were in this house, under the assumed names of Tourville and Bompart, and also that Madame de Coulancourt had her son concealed here also. Do not think that even Monsieur Barras's power can shield culprits, against whom such charges can be fully proven."

"It will be time enough, Monsieur Gramont," returned Jean Plessis, recovering his usual calmness, "to argue this point when Madame Coulancourt arrives in Paris; she will not shrink from investigation. At the same time, others will have to answer grave charges. Antoine Dubois" (the Maire started) "declares that the man now lying wounded in your house, was one of the party who in the disguise of Chouans attempted to rob me of important papers, and that his name is Vadier—Augustine Vadier, once a galley slave, afterwards one of the monster Robespierre's diables."

"Where is that villain Dubois," furiously interrupted Bertram Gramont, "he shall pay dearly for his lies. It was only this morning that I turned the wretch from my house for insolence and drunkenness."

"He says, Monsieur," returned Jean Plessis, "that he was turned away because he demanded five hundred francs of this robber Vadier, for inducing a girl in this house, called Dedan, to be a spy upon her mistress and all in the house."

Bertram Gramont was completely taken aback; he stamped with rage, only repeating:

"I demand, as Maire of this district, to know where is this cursed liar and villain?"

"He is not far from Havre at this moment, Monsieur," said Jean Plessis. "I met him on the road, and he confessed the whole to me, and that Dedan was his accomplice. When I returned and taxed the girl she burst into tears, and did not deny it. She too has left the house."

"I will not leave an inch of skin on that lying villain's back," said the Maire, turning towards

the door; "there is no use, Jean Plessis, in our bandying words; we know each other, we shall meet in Paris, and depend upon it you have not triumphed over me or accomplished your project yet. I shall not, of course, dispute Monsieur Barras' and Monsieur Fouché's right to grant Madame Coulancourt and her daughter, and yourself and family, safe conduct to Paris, but your passport does not extend to her son, Julian Arden! Ah! you start! the game is equal still, we shall see who wins," and passing into the lower hall he remained some minutes conversing with Sergeant Perrin; then mounting his horse rode at a sharp pace from the Chateau.

Ten minutes afterwards Sergeant Perrin and his men also left the Chateau.

CHAPTER X.

MADAME COULANCOURT and Mabel beheld Monsieur Gramont ride down the avenue from the Chateau with feelings difficult to describe.

"That horrid man," said Mabel, "thought to terrify you, dear mother, into some compromise or promise, by acting on your feelings with respect to my brother's safety. He stated a falsity when he said Julian was arrested. It's impossible he could know anything about him, for Joseph assured us he had crossed to the opposite side of the river, before he left to return with the ponies."

"I forgot that, dear girl; I was so startled by his saying he had discovered Louis Lebeau to be Julian. There must be some traitor or spy in the chateau; who can it be?"

"It must be Dedan, the girl from Dame Moret's farm. Julia told me she had a lover to whom she was shortly to be married,—a domestic in the house of Monsieur Gramont. She appears a kind, good-humoured girl. Oh, here is Julia."

"Thanks to the virgin," said Julia, "they are gone, gendarmes and all; and only to think of it! it's that girl Dedan who has done all the mischief. Here is my father, he will explain all."

Monsieur Plessis and his wife entered the room; the latter looked pale and frightened.

"You look alarmed, Marie," said Madame Coulancourt, to her Intendant's good lady, and taking her hand they sat down on a sofa. "What makes you look so serious, now that we have, as dear Julian would say, weathered the storm."

"I was so shocked," returned Madame Plessis,

"by the discovery of the treachery of that girl, who might have destroyed us all by her weak infatuation."

"How did you discover her treachery, Jean Plessis?" said Madame. "For you cleverly turned the tables upon that designing man, Monsieur Gramont."

"I had not the slightest idea," said Jean Plessis, "when I left the chateau this morning that we had an enemy in the camp. We got to Havre to breakfast; I left Marie to make some purchases, and went to my appointment with Captain Bonnefour, the owner of the chasse-mare, and finally we arranged our terms and mode of proceeding; wishing to be back early for fear Monsieur Gramont should visit the chateau. As I drove into the yard, the man, Antoine Dubois, was coming out of an outhouse. When he saw me, he hesitated, and thought to get out by a back way, but as I had given the girl Dedan strict injunctions not to receive her intended husband at the chateau, I followed the man, and he paused till I came up.

"'What brought you here this morning, Dubois?' I demanded. I knew the man well for he is a native of this place, and never bore a very good character. He looked at me a moment and then said: 'If you will give me a hundred francs, Monsieur Plessis, and promise not to detain me or the girl Dedan, I will tell you news that may save you all from the clutches of Monsieur Gramont, who drove me out of his house two hours ago, and will be here, I expect, every moment.' I was struck with the man's manner, and aware how critical our situation is, I said, 'I promise you, and if you really give me any intelligence that I consider of consequence, I will give you two hundred francs, and you and this girl Dedan, whom I suspect, shall be free to go where you like.'

"'Well, then,' said Dubois, 'the two hundred francs, are mine. The man that led the pretended robbers to plunder you the day you arrived here with the young demoiselles, is now lying wounded in Monsieur Gramont's mansion; it was he who induced the coastguard to endea-

vour to secure the two Englishmen you had hid in this chateau. He did so, whilst Monsieur Gramont was gone to Paris; he wished to catch you all trying to escape, and then arrest you.'

"'Do you know the wounded man's name?' I demanded.

"'Yes,' he replied. 'It is Vadier; he is a desperate jacobin. He told me I should have five hundred francs if I could get the girl Dedan to tell everything that passed in the chateau, and all she heard, and though the girl was not willing I at last induced her to do so.'

"I was struck at once by the name of Vadier. This then is the very Vadier, the galley slave, who stole the casket under the charge of the English midshipman."

"'What did Monsieur Gramont go to Paris for?' I questioned.

"'To procure an order from Monsieur Fouché to arrest you all, and send you to Paris.'

"'Then Monsieur Gramont was aware that this Vadier intended to plunder me as I travelled the road?'

"'Certainly he was. It was planned between them; they wanted some papers you had.'

"'Come,' said I, 'this intelligence is worth the two hundred francs; but, Antoine Dubois, you are a great rascal.'

"'There are many more in the world,' said the fellow quite coolly; 'that Vadier is one, and my late master another. They treated me scurvily, and so let them take the consequence.'

"'If he catches you after this disclosure, he will make you pay for it.'

"'Ah, Ca! He must catch me first. Have I earned the money?'

"'Yes,' said I; 'whether it will do you good or not I cannot say. There it is,' and I gave it him. 'Now, where are you going?'

"'If you intend stating what I have told you to Monsieur Gramont,' said Dubois, 'you may say I am gone to Havre. I only require an hour's start. You will let the girl, Dedan, go?'

"'Yes. She is a bad girl; but you made her so. She shall be dismissed.'

"'Well,' said the man, doggedly, 'may be so;

but we are not so bad as those who tempted us. I detested that wretch Vadier, and I hope he will die of his wound; I wanted to quit service and to marry Dedan, and the five hundred francs tempted me.' "

"Do you think, Monsieur Plessis," asked Mabel, "that they will be caught by Monsieur Gramont?"

"I rather think," said Jean Plessis, "that he would prefer their escaping. I do not imagine he will look for them. What surprises me is, that he ventured to drive out of his employ a man who knew so much."

"I suspect," observed Julia, "that he acquired his knowledge of what he told you, father, from practising the same espionage upon his employers, that he was paid or promised to be paid for spying upon us."

"Very likely," returned the Intendant; "however, his intelligence was of immense importance to me. It completely gave me the upper hand of Monsieur Gramont."

"How do you intend to proceed," said Madame

Coulancourt? "I feel so very anxious about Julian."

"He has done wisely in crossing to the other side of the river," said Jean Plessis. "He did not go further than the village of ———, two leagues from here. We must, however, lose no more time, but act with all expedition. We have a shrewd enemy, and I believe if I had not known about this Augustine Vadier, he would have done much more than he will attempt now. To-morrow I will send down your luggage and travelling carriage to be embarked on board the chasse-mare; it will be a complete blind. It is nearly eighteen leagues to Rouen, and it will create no surprise, your going there by water. Most travellers from Havre prefer it for the sake of the scenery, and at present, owing to the recent disturbances, the roads are really dangerous. The day after to-morrow, therefore, Madame, can you be ready?"

"As to that, we could be ready to-morrow evening," said Mabel, "but with respect to Julian, how are we to manage?"

"There will be no difficulty. When off the coast we will take him on board. I shall send one of the crew of the boat to the village to stay and watch for us, and let Monsieur Julian know; the man will seek him, of course, under the name of Lebeau."

"God grant," said Madame Coulancourt, "that no untoward event may occur to mar your apparently well laid plans!"

In the meantime, Monsieur Gramont rode rapidly towards his own mansion, bitterly cursing the sagacity and foresight of Jean Plessis. He guessed at once how he had contrived to procure the protection of Barras and Fouché, both men playing into each other's hands.

"He must," muttered Bertram Gramont, "have sacrificed an immense sum to Barras, whose boundless extravagance is universally known."

John Nicholas Barras began life as a sub-lieutenant in the regiment of Languedoc, served a short time in India, became a determined revolutionist, and was one of those who voted for

the death of the unfortunate Louis the Sixteenth. His power and arbitrary will are well known, and he exercised them to enrich himself, caring little, so he kept up his boundless extravagance and gratified his inordinate vanity, whether he served the Republic or not. He kept his place till Bonaparte dispersed the existing government. Jean Plessis had in truth sacrificed a very large sum to Barras, besides the twenty thousand francs; he had also confessed that Madame Coulancourt's daughter had arrived from England to remain with her mother.

"Shewed she was a dutiful child," said the Director, "a couple of women cannot overturn the Republic. We do not war with the fair sex. Let them come up to Paris, and they shall have every protection. Monsieur Gramont has found a mare's nest; that Englishman he spoke of, domiciled at Coulancourt, I dare say is a lover of Mademoiselle Arden. Fool enough to run the chance of a few years' captivity for a smile from his ladye love, *n'est ce pas?*"

"Monsieur Plessis assented, but gave no

further explanation, and having obtained the passport expressly revoking the order of arrest given six or seven days previously by Fouché to Monsieur Gramont, he returned to Coulancourt, thus completely baffling Monsieur le Maire.

Bertram Gramont, on reaching his Chateau, proceeded to the chamber of Augustine Vadier. That worthy had contrived to get up and dress himself, and was reclining back in a chair with a bandage across his head, concealing the contusion and loss of his eye.

"Here's a cursed botched piece of business from beginning to end," said Bertram Gramont passionately, pacing the chamber backwards and forwards!

"Why, what has occurred now?" asked Vadier anxiously, "I think I may say I am a sufferer."

"Your own doings," returned his accomplice, almost savagely, "you precipitated events. That cursed Jean Plessis has outwitted me; he has paid an immense sum to Barras and Fouché, and has come back from Paris with a most

stringent passport, there is no disputing the purport, for it actually ensures the safety of mother and daughter to Paris, and they leave this to-morrow or the next day."

"Diable!" muttered Vadier; "how do they go?"

"In a chasse-mare, I understand, to Rouen, or as far as they can by water."

"And do you believe they will go to Paris?" said Vadier, looking with his remaining sinister optic into the flushed features of Bertram Gramont.

"And where else would you have them go?" returned the Maire, pausing in his walk.

"Why escape to England, after that cursed Lieutenant in the English navy they intended to go before he made his escape on board the corvette. Where's the son, Julian?"

Bertram Gramont looked at his accomplice with a startled expression.

"By St. Nicholas! your idea is not a bad one, it's possible; but do you know that Jean

Plessis has discovered you are here, and also that it was you who stopped and attemped to rob him a month ago."

"Tonnerre de diable! how is that?" exclaimed Augustine Vadier starting up, his one orb flashing with excitement. "Who betrayed me?"

"It's deuced little consequence," said Gramont, "because Plessis is not likely to make any advantage of his discovery. He used it against me though, for he insinuated that I was your accomplice."

"But who betrayed my retreat?" again demanded Augustine Vadier, "if the government knew I was here, or anywhere in France, they would have my head."

"It's only three parts of a head now," replied his companion, with one of his sneering laughs. "But make yourself easy, they do not want heads; they would be content to send you to Cayenne, it's a hot place, but—"

"Take care, Bertram Gramont," interrupted the ci-devant galley slave, "that you do not

carry your cursed propensity for joking too far; if I make a journey to Cayenne, it's not unlikely but that you would keep me company."

Bertram Gramont laughed outright.

"Diable! you are sensitive, mon ami. If I should have to keep you company we should still row in the same boat; come, come, be sensible."

Augustine Vadier swallowed his ire, and again demanded how Jean Plessis had obtained his information about him.

"Through our own folly," said Gramont. "I thought myself so secure in my projects, that it slipped my memory how unwise it was to turn that rascal Antoine Dubois out of my service, drunken and impudent that he was!"

"Antoine Dubois!" repeated Vadier with intense surprise, "how did that villain find out my real name?"

"Ma foi! being employed as a spy taught him, no doubt, the trick of practising the trade at home. The rascal must have been acting the spy upon us, and no doubt picked up his infor-

mation by listening, and may be, overhauling some of your papers."

"Curse him! you open my eyes," said Vadier bitterly; "but no matter, let us consult what is to be done. Your matrimonial scheme did not answer, your finances are at the lowest ebb, and this day month if you do not pay one hundred and twenty-three thousand francs to Monsieur Marie-Claude-Sanglois, you must surrender this estate and chateau to be sold."

"Well, I know that," carelessly returned Bertram Gramont, "I want something fresh from you. Could you not forge me an order, signed by Madame Coulancourt, for one hundred thousand francs upon her banker?"

"No," returned Vadier, "the failure in securing those papers Jean Plessis had in his possession throws us out. Her Paris banker has no such sum, depend on it; the bulk of her fortune is disposed of in some other way we have failed in finding out. Monsieur Barras, depend on it, has secured a goodly portion. No, you must still stick to convicting her of attempt-

ing flight from this country, the only way you can secure your ends."

"Diable! she is going to Paris; if Sergeant Perrin fails in entrapping her son at Caudebee, I shall lose all power over her."

"And are you so shallow as to suppose they will venture to Paris," said Vadier contemptuously. "When this affair of the 'Vengeance' is known to the government it will make a stir, Barras will not be able to shield Madame Coulancourt, with all his power and love of gold; her participation and knowledge of the two Englishmen residing under the same roof with her is too palpable, she would be condemned. Depend on it, the whole party meditate flight to England; what is easier? You say they embark at Havre for Rouen in a chasse-mare, the captain of which is a notorious smuggler. Do not you think, for a sum of money, that fellow would run them over and land them on the coast of England?"

"By St. Nicholas, you are right, and if so all will go well. I'll catch them in the very act of

flight, and then the game will be ours. You must get out of the way, for this Jean Plessis, when detected and caught, will bring his accusation against you.

"I'm not afraid," replied Vadier, "it's money I want. I shall go to Paris, there is another convulsion preparing, the Jacobins are in force in the capital."

"You will be a fool if you do," retorted Bertram Gramont; "mark my word, Bonaparte will by and bye upset all the Directors and their rules, annihilate the Jacobin party, and establish a powerful military government. However, that's your look out; I shall go, to-morrow, to Havre, and make minute inquiries about the embarcation of Madame, and then see Captain Gaudet and the owners of the 'Vengeance' privateer, who are furious at her loss. I will have the Ca-ira chasse mare closely watched and followed, and if my suspicions are true, she shall be captured just as she clears the harbour. There will be no getting over that disaster, and perhaps Master Louis Lebeau may be a prisoner by that time.

There is a very fine privateer, mounting fourteen guns, and one hundred and twenty-three men and officers in Havre, but this British cruiser outside is thought to be watching for her; the privateer is waiting for thick weather to get out. If Captain Gaudet can induce her commander to watch the mouth of the Seine, it's impossible the chasse-mare can put to sea."

"I would go on board myself, if I was in your place," said Augustine Vadier. "Your triumph would be complete."

"By all the saints, so it would," said Bertram Gramont, exultingly; "it would repay me for the insult that rascal, Jean Plessis, inflicted on me this day. If your conjecture turns out right, and we catch them, nothing can save them from condemnation.

CHAPTER XI.

After the departure of the "Onyx" corvette our hero remained in the "Vengeance" lying to, very busy setting her completely in order.

The men were delighted with the privateer, the accommodation being so vastly superior to a vessel of war. The weather was remarkably beautiful with smooth water and light breezes. As Lieutenant Thornton and his midshipman, Master Burdett, sat at dinner, the latter said:

"Would not you like, sir, to try the merits of this fine craft. I'm sure she would beat anything afloat."

"I dare say she would, Master Burdett; but having a certain object in view, I must not get out of the direct line of the Port of Havre. I intend standing in towards evening. We are short handed, and lightly armed, and though all the guns are below, we could not work more than we have on deck; besides I do not think, under present circumstances, I should be justified in seeking an action with an enemy; if forced into one, it's another thing."

"Sail to the westward, sir," cried Bill Saunders, down the cabin skylight; "large ship seemingly."

Lieutenant Thornton hastened upon deck, joyfully followed by Master Burdett, who rejoiced in the hope of either a chase, a fight, or even being chased. Midshipmen are insatiable, and very mercurial kind of animals. On gaining the deck, Lieutenant Thornton took his glass, and regarded the stranger; her top-gallant sails only could be seen, and they were braced sharp on a wind.

"That is a vessel of war, no doubt," he coolly

observed, "and by the cut of her top-gallant sails, I should say French, standing in for Havre. We may readily pass for a French privateer; but if the captain hears when he gets into Havre, about the cutting out of the 'Vengeance,' he will come out again and look for us, and drive us off the coast, which would defeat my project. Cast off the fore sheet, and let us get an offing till the stranger gets into port, if he is so bound."

"Aye, aye, sir!" said Bill, who acted as chief mate, "blow me if it ain't a pity we bean't in ship-shape—more guns and more men; we would soon stop that ere chap."

The 'Vengeance' was now under weigh, with her full complement of sail, for the first time since captured, and the men looked over the side, with many a remark, upon the smooth and rapid way she went through the water.

"She's a clipper, Master Burdett," said Lieutenant Thornton. "This is a light breeze comparatively speaking; just take the small glass, and call one of the men aft, and see what we are making."

In a few minutes, the log line was overboard, Bill slacking the line, and Master Burdett holding the glass.

"Stop," sung out Bill, and looking at the marks, declared she was going nine knots. This was a surprising speed for the wind then blowing. "There be very few crafts, sir," continued Bill, "that could hold their own with this here 'Vengeance;' she'd laugh at a frigate in a light breeze."

"She always did, Bill, even before her spars and sails were increased. You will see in half-an-hour we shall sink the stranger's top-gallant sails."

Finding such to be the case, the 'Vengeance' was again hove to, whilst the crew still watched the course of the stranger. Presently they could see her topsails, and then our hero decidedly declared her to be a French frigate. Their fore and main lug were then lowered, and under her mizen and gib, she kept pretty much in the same place, and as the sun went down they lost sight

of the French ship, which evidently stood in for the Port of Havre, without noticing them.

Sail was then made, and they hauled in for the land. Lieutenant Thornton was in an extremely anxious state of mind; he was far from feeling sure that Jean Plessis would be able to carry out his plans. If he failed, it was terrible to think how many years might pass before he should be again blessed with the sight of his beloved Mabel. It was one consolation to him, however, to know that in the then state of France there was no fear of either cruel persecution or death. The government were anxious to wipe away that frightful stain that no time will ever obliterate from the pages of French history.

Still, their youth might pass away, and their day dreams of love and felicity fade, like almost everything else in this transitory and shifting globe. But young hope struggled in his breast, though some writer, we forget his name, declares: —"We believe at once in evil and never believe in good; but upon reflection this is sad. But

we live in hope, and we never cease to indulge in hope to the last."

As they stretched in with the land to the westward of Havre, about the middle of the first watch, the man on the look out sung out:

"Sail ahead on the starboard bow!"

Lieutenant Thornton, who was pacing the deck chatting to the young midshipman, went forward, and looking over the starboard bulwarks, perceived two vessels standing towards them; they were about a league off. One was a schooner, the other a large chasse-mare.

They were making for Havre, and must have seen the "Vengeance," but as our hero imagined, mistook her for a French vessel, for no British cruizers or privateers were lugger rigged. The chasse-mare was nearly as large in tonnage as the "Vengeance," though not near so long. In ten minutes, as they were then steering, they would be along side each other.

"I'm blessed if that schooner ain't an English one," said Bill Saunders to a messmate, as they stood regarding the two vessels

Lieutenant Thornton thought so too, and he also thought the chasse-mare was a privateer. It was a clear, fine night with a light wind at east and by south. To let the two vessels run into Havre would betray the "Vengeance" being on the coast, so he made up his mind to run the chasse-mare on board and take her, if possible, by surprise. When the crew of the "Vengeance" were apprised of his intention, they joyfully ran to arm and prepare for the struggle, not bestowing a thought upon the disparity of force in men. As the chasse-mare came on, followed at half a mile distance by the schooner, they could see at all events that there were double their own number on board.

Lieutenant Thornton prepared to hail, desiring young Burdett to stand by the man at the helm, adding, "when I give the signal, run her on board." Standing in the bows of the "Vengeance," our hero with a speaking trumpet hailed the Frenchman, who as well as the lugger had no colours flying. Demanding the name of the vessel, a man in the bows replied:

"The 'Belle Poule,' of Havre, Captain Francois Bouvet, with a prize. Are you the 'Vengeance,' Captain Pierre Gaudet?"

Lieutenant Thornton waved his hat. The next moment the helm was put down, and the lugger, shooting up rapidly in the wind's eye, came right across the quarter of the "Belle Poule," and dropped along-side. A cheer that utterly astounded the French crew pealed over the deep, and as the two vessels became locked together by grappling irons thrown from the "Vengeance" into the "Belle Poule," Lieutenant Thornton, followed by his entire crew, leaped on board the enemy, cutlass and pistol in hand. Taken completely by surprise, and quite unprepared, the crew of the "Belle-Poule," after a few ill-aimed shots at the boarders, threw down their arms and ran below, excepting the Captain and two of his officers; the former was disarmed, though in a furious passion, by Lieutenant Thornton. The Lieutenant and first mate, seeing the Captain disarmed, threw down their cutlasses and surrendered. Bill Saunders' first

object was to fasten the French crew down below, for they amounted in number to forty-eight, without reckoning the Captain, Lieutenant, and mate. A violent scuffle below, however, attracted Bill's attention, and some words reaching his ear, he called Master Burdett, and then by inquiry discovered that there were fourteen English prisoners below. Lieutenant Thornton immediately ordered the men up, and as the French crew of the 'Belle-Poule' had no idea of the small number of their assailants, they obeyed the order, and, one by one, up came fourteen stout, able-bodied seamen, giving three hearty cheers as they gained the deck.

"The schooner has tacked, sir, and is standing off to sea," said Bill Saunders.

"Stand by then, to separate the vessels," returned Lieutenant Thornton. "Now, my lads," he continued, turning to the released prisoners, "you must assist; we are, as you see, short handed."

"Aye, aye, sir; with all our hearts," said a short, broad, hard-featured man, who said he was

first mate of the schooner. "This was a devil of a surprise, sir, and a bold venture," he added as he looked at the few men belonging to the "Vengeance," actively engaged separating the vessels.

"What is the name of your schooner, my man?" demanded Lieutenant Thornton.

"The 'Fox' privateer, sir; eight guns and sixty men, from Poole,—Captain George Goodall."

"How is that?" said our hero, surprised. "Did you strike to this craft?"

"No, sir," said the mate, "that we did not; we'd seed him to the devil first. We struck to the 'Virginie' frigate after beating this here chap, and a small lugger that came up with us off Ushant; but the 'Virginie' coming up, threatened to sink us if we did not strike, so in course we did; and so the Captain of the frigate who was watching the motions of our ships off Brest and Isle Dieu, took our Captain and First Lieutenant and nineteen of the men on board the 'Virginie,' and then this here chap put us

fourteen down below, and sent a prize crew into the schooner with orders to take us into Havre, where the frigate was bound to. The schooner is a mortal fast boat, sir; if you don't look out you'll never catch her."

"Do not be alarmed about that, mate," replied our hero. "We shall have her before two hours are out. Now I must divide our prisoners, for I cannot spare more than half-a-dozen men to take charge of this craft. I will leave five or six of your own men to keep her in our wake, whilst I chase the schooner."

"Aye, aye, sir," returned the mate; "that we will do, and willingly lend a hand in any way you think fit."

Having divided the prisoners, and separated the vessels, the "Vengeance" made all sail after the captured "Fox." There was a fine smooth water breeze, and the schooner with every sail drawing was making her way for the land, seeking to enter a deep bay, on whose western point, Lieutenant Thornton knew there was a battery of four heavy guns. The "Vengeance" sailed

under her enormous lugs and top sails, like a witch, and yet so evenly and smoothly, that she created but little foam under her bows. Fast as the schooner certainly sailed, the "Vengeance" went two feet for her one. The crew of the "Fox" were in admiration of her speed, for just as the schooner came within reach of the battery the "Vengeance" was close up with her. Nevertheless, the prize crew in the "Fox" opened fire upon them from her six-pounders; but Lieutenant Thornton, who could have done her considerable damage long before, did not return her fire, not wishing to injure the schooner; therefore, he at once ran alongside, and his men being prepared, with a loud cheer, leaped down upon her deck, cutlass in hand. There were six or seven-and-twenty fierce privateer's men on board the "Fox," who received them with a volley from firearms; but our hero, followed closely by Bill Saunders, dashed in amongst the enraged enemy, driving them aft with a spirit and energy that staggered them. In the midst of the contest the English prisoners broke loose from below to the

number of twenty, and with a loud cheer seized every available weapon, and attacked the enemy with a vigour and resolution that soon settled the affair, and the Captain, having lost two of his crew and a dozen wounded, surrendered, just as the fort on the point opened fire; her first shot knocking the jib-boom of the schooner to atoms. By this time day-light dawned, and our hero at once ordered the two vessels to make sail from the shore. As the schooner hove round, a second shot knocked away her figure-head and part of her stern; but, a fresh wind blowing, she soon got out of range of the battery. Thornton had one or two slight cuts himself, and several of his men also; but none were seriously hurt. Our hero had a consultation with the mate of the "Fox" privateer, who, marvellously elated at the recapture of the schooner, was perfectly willing to do whatever Lieutenant Thornton considered most expedient.

Our hero wished him to run the two vessels across Channel to Poole, from whence the "Fox" hailed, and surrender her to her owners, leaving

the settlement of re-capture to be arranged when he arrived in England. As to the prisoners, being more in number than the united crews, our hero had them all put into the boats of the "Belle-Poule," and, standing to the eastward of the battery, permitted them to pull for the shore—a proceeding that afterwards proved exceedingly injurious to our hero.

Making but short delay, the two crafts bore away across Channel, whilst the "Vengeance" worked back to the mouth of the Seine. During the day Lieutenant Thornton got up two more guns from the hold of the "Vengeance," and mounted them, and repaired the damage done to the rigging and sails.

CHAPTER XII.

The fifth morning after the cutting out of the "Vengeance," Madame Coulancourt and her daughter, and Monsieur Plessis and his family left the chateau in two carriages, for Havre, to embark in the "Ca-Ira" chasse-mare, apparently destined for Rouen. The party reached Havre in time to take advantage of the first of the flood tide; and though not without experiencing some degree of anxiety, they felt no positive fear, having seen no more of Monsieur Gramont, and having arranged everything with Dame Moret nd her daughters, leaving them under the im

pression that they were actually going to Paris. Monsieur Plessis, though perfectly persuaded of their fidelity and trustworthiness, yet, for their own sakes, in case of any future investigation, he wished them to remain perfectly clear of any participation in their escape to England.

Havre de Grace, seen from the water, presents an imposing and handsome appearance. The breadth of the Seine is considerable; the citadel and arsenal, and the immense storehouses for the construction and arming of ships, give it the appearance of a formidable sea-port town, being entirely surrounded by walls and deep ditches. The harbour of Havre is subject to a curious phenomenon—the tide does not begin to ebb till three hours after the full tide.

Having embarked on board the chasse-mare, and all being ready, the warps were cast off, and the sails set, the vessel glided out from the quay into the broad stream, with Havre on one side, and the town and spacious harbour of Honfleur on the other. There was an awning over the stern of the vessel, and the wind being

fair, and the tide strong, the "Ca-Ira," under her foresail and mizen, went rapidly up with the tide. Jean Plessis pointed out to Madame Coulancourt, Mabel, and his daughter Julia, several privateers in the harbour, one a remarkably handsome lugger, the "Etoile," which they passed close alongside.

"That," said Jean Plessis, "is a larger vessel than the 'Vengeance,' though not reputed so fast or so fortunate as the other was before her capture. The 'Etoile' has eighty men on board, and carries twelve guns of various calibre. I am told she is going to sea to-morrow evening with a frigate called the 'Virginie,' lying in the outer harbour. This is fortunate, for if we run out to-night we shall be well out of sight—indeed, across the Channel—before they lift their anchors."

Little did Monsieur Plessis imagine that, as they shot past the "Etoile," Bertram Gramont and Augustine Vadier were both, from the cabin windows, regarding all the motions of those on board the "Ca-Ira." No sooner had the chasse-

mare with our party proceeded a mile from the "Etoile," than a fast rowing-boat, pulled by four oars, left the privateer, and with Augustine Vadier, his head bandaged, but his one eye keen and vengeful, seated in the stern sheets, pulled quickly after the "Ca-Ira," merely keeping her in sight.

Mabel felt her spirits rise as they receded from the view of Havre, shut out by the head of the noble river on whose placid surface the chasse-mare glided with scarcely a perceptible motion.

"I feel," said our fair heroine to Julia, as they sat together under the awning, gazing at the beautiful scenery on both sides of the wide river, "I feel such a lightness of heart now that we have lost sight of Havre. Do you know I detest the sight of walled towns, frowning forts, with stern sentinels pacing gloomily backwards and forwards, seemingly engaged in nothing, and still ready to pounce upon any unwary intruder. It appears as if the inhabitants of those towns were prisoners, and shut out from all intercourse

with those without; then the tiresome examination of papers and passports, as if every soul going in or out was suspected of something, annoys me."

Julia smiled, saying, "Custom, ma chere; but have you no walls to your towns in England?"

"No, thank goodness! if I except the picturesque ivy-covered ruins of barbarous times, that you may yet get a glimpse of in some of our very old cities. In dear old England you may come and go into our cities and towns, and no one inquires whence you come or whither you go. The houses and cottages, gardens and fields, seem mingled together in happy liberty of situation, neither kept in by proscribed limits, or ruled by arbitrary restrictions."

"Well," observed Julia, with a half-sigh, "I love France, with all its faults—faults of its rulers. Providence has bestowed upon it a fine climate, and beautiful scenery, not inferior to any other country, in my poor opinion—only marred by the ambition and sad acts of its sons."

"I trust, dear Julia," returned Mabel, affectionately, "you do not too much regret the land we are about to leave."

"Oh, no, my sweet Mabel," interrupted Julia, "it is a consolation that I carry my heart with me." There was a slight increase of color in her cheek, as she said the words, for Mabel's expressive eyes were fixed upon hers; "fortunately I am heart-whole," she added, with a gay laugh; "for if I left a lover behind me it would be a sad thing."

Mabel made no reply; at that moment her thoughts were occupied. Madame Coulancourt was conversing with Madame Plessis, whilst Jean Plessis and the Captain of the "Ca-Ira" were in close consultation. Having proceeded up the river as far as the village of Eure, the chasse-mare furled her sails, and let go her anchor. It was nearly sunset, and a light grey mist—a sign of a still, hot night—began to steal up from the water and creep lightly over the land. The row boat, which had carefully followed them at a safe distance, saw the chasse-mare anchor, whilst

yet there was flood tide to run further up, now pulled in shore, and Augustine Vadier, and one of the crew took the road to the village, about five hundred yards from the western shore of the river.

Having reached within a short distance of the road that led up from the river to the village, they stationed themselves behind a hedge, observing every person that passed along that road.

Presently they perceived two young men in sailors' attire, come out from a cabaret, and take their way towards the water.

"Ha!" said Augustine Vadier, "I should say that tall one is the Master Louis Lebeau we seek."

"Parbleu," said the sailor, "he may be; but I know that the short one is Pierre Leveque, one of the crew of the 'Ca-Ira.' I sailed with him several times in her, and many a jolly cargo we landed under the cliffs of Dover."

"Then we are both right," said Vadier, "and it's a very clear case too that they will

drop down with the night's tide and get to sea, if we don't prevent them."

"As for that, you may do as you please," returned the sailor, "you may arrest those that are passengers in the Ca-Ira; but, morbleu! you're not going, surely, to have up her captain and crew for making a good bargain for the use of their craft. I, for one, won't turn against an old comrade."

"Diable! what do we want with the Ca-Ira," said Augustine Vadier, "or her crew; they will not be touched. We only intend arresting her passengers, for that Louis Lebeau you see with Pierre Leveque, is comrade to the Englishman who cut out the 'Vengeance.'"

"Sacre diable! is that the case," said the privateer's man, "I would rather have a shot at those blustering Englishmen than a quarter's pay."

He was right in his conjecture.

"Ah!" said Vadier as he and his comrade crept along the hedge, and watched the movements of the two young men, "a boat is pulling

to shore from the chasse-mare, you will see they will go on board." For the two men in sailor's attire were Louis Lebeau and Pierre Eveque.

"We may now pull back to the 'Etoile,'" remarked Vadier, "I am satisfied; the fog is getting thick on the river, and we shall have to keep a sharp look-out that the vessel does not pass us in the mist."

It was dusk by the time the boat got back to the "Etoile." Augustine Vadier, getting on board, proceeded to the cabin, where he found Bertram Gramont, the captain of the "Etoile," Guillaume, Yves Obet, and Captain Pierre Gaudet, late of the "Vengeance." Augustine Vadier went by a false name. None of the party in the cabin knew him only as a friend of Monsieur Gramont's.

"Well," said Bertram Gramont, "where did they anchor?"

"Oh, just where we suspected," said Augustine Vadier, "off the village of Eure, and then we saw this pretended Louis Lebeau, and one Pierre Eveque, one of the crew of the 'Ca-Ira,'

who has been away from his vessel these last three or four days, go on board the chasse-mare in their boat."

"Just as I expected," said Bertram Gramont.

"It is a well-laid and well-planned scheme," observed the skipper of the "Etoile," "they will drop down no doubt with the ebb, and then join the 'Vengeance' outside."

"What!" exclaimed Vadier, savagely, and fixing his one eye on the speaker, "is the lugger, the 'Vengeance' off the coast?"

"Yes, sacre voluer! it is there sure enough; but we'll have her again from those accursed Anglais. We intend to get under weigh, presently, and wait for the coming in sight of the 'Ca-Ira;' which is a very fast boat, and can easily beat the 'Etoile;' but as we pass the 'Vengeance,' now lying at anchor, the 'Etoile' will at once put to sea and effectually cut off the 'Vengeance' and this 'Ca-Ira' also."

"But how the diable did you not discover that your lugger was outside?" said Augustus

Vadier, "I understood that she sailed with the brig for England."

"Aye, aye! so it was thought," said Gaudet, "but the night before last, this infernal Lieutenant Thornton, who cut out the lugger with the boats of the 'Onyx' corvette, ran on board the privateer 'Belle Poule' and took her by surprise, as well as her prize the 'Fox' schooner, and this under the nose of the battery of Grantell Point."

"Parbleu! he's a brave officer, at all events," said the skipper of the 'Etoile,' "but I think he has now run out his log."

"When did you hear all this cursed intelligence?" remarked Vadier to Monsieur Gramont.

"Half an hour after you left, a boat crossed over from Harfleur with two of the crew of the 'Belle Poule,' who were landed below the battery of Grantill; they brought the news, and their Captain, Obet, sent his boat with the intelligence to the frigate 'Virginie,' which was luckily lying at single anchor in the roads. The commander

of the 'Virginie' is extremely anxious to recapture the 'Vengeance;' so you see our plans are well laid. This lugger has become remarkably notorious. In fact there is quite a fever amongst the officers and men belonging to the privateers to regain possession of the 'Vengeance.'"

Shortly after this conversation, the 'Etoile' was got under weigh. The light mist still lay upon the surface of the water, but the land wind was rising, which would most likely disperse it.

As the 'Etoile' came up with the 'Virginie,' they perceived that the frigate was already getting under weigh, and one of the officers hailed the lugger; desiring the skipper to heave to at the entrance, rather to the westward; as they were going to take advantage of the fog, and run well out.

Two hours after this, there was not a breath of wind, and the mist lay thicker than ever upon the surface of the deep. Those on board the "Etoile" were in a state of great anxiety,

for they were merely drifting with the tide, and could not see twenty yards from them.

"Morbleu! this is a contre-temps," said Guillaume Obet to Captain Gaudet, who were pacing the deck, anxiously trying to distinguish objects through the mist, "that 'Ca-Ira' may slip through our fingers if this fog continues."

"No, there is no fear of that," returned Captain Gaudet, "the frigate must have gained a good offing whilst the breeze lasted, so that when the fog lifts with the rising of the sun, we shall not be far off of our chase, depend on it; for the 'Ca-Ira,' coming down the river, must also have been becalmed like ourselves, whereas the frigate stood out with the breeze."

At sunset, as was his usual custom, Lieutenant Thornton stood close in for the harbour's mouth; but, the wind getting very light, and a mist setting in over the line of coast, the 'Vengeance' was hove to about a league from the entrance into the harbour, and a strict and careful watch kept. Our hero was beginning to get uneasy. Five days had passed, and no craft had left the

port of Havre steering a direct course out to sea. He was sure of this, for the weather had been beautifully fine, and the nights clear, and the watch kept incessant and vigilant. There was no sign either of the "Onyx" corvette.

About midnight, finding it still perfectly calm, and the mist thick, he retired for a few hours' sleep, so that he might be on deck with the break of day, when he expected the fog to lift with a land breeze.

Between three and four o'clock in the morning, he jumped up and dressing, repaired upon deck. As he expected, with the rising of the sun, the fog began to lift from the sea, and the breeze off the coast came fresh and pleasant after the heat of the previous night. Suddenly the haze dispersed like magic, as if it had never existed, and the full rays of a dazzling July sun fell upon the sea around them, the water sparkling and rippling under the influence of that most pleasant of breezes—a land wind—especially if in the Mediterranean, where it comes off, laden

with the perfume of the orange and citron, and the hundred other odoriferous plants that flourish beneath the southern skies of Italy. The sight that met the anxious gaze of Lieutenant Thornton, brought all the blood into his cheeks and temples with excitement.

The "Vengeance" was about four miles off the port of Havre, the breeze blowing steadily out. Coming before the wind, was a large chasse-mare, under all the sail she could carry, and from her foretopmast waved a large red ensign; she was scarcely two miles from the "Vengeance." Stretching across from the western side of the Seine's mouth, was the "Etoile," privateer, also under a cloud of canvass. She was scarcely a mile from the "Ca-Ira," and it appeared to be her evident intention to cross her course.

As yet, so absorbed were those on board the "Vengeance," regarding the chasse-mare, which carried the signal at the mast-head, so long wished for, that no one thought of looking seaward, till their attention was attracted

by the boom of a heavy gun in that direction. Turning round, with a startled look, Lieutenant Thornton beheld a frigate about three miles to leeward covered from her trucks to her deck with a snow white cloud of canvass. There was no mistaking her, it was the French frigate of thirty-two guns, the "Virginie."

"By Heavens!" exclaimed Lieutenant Thornton, after a glance with his glass, "that is the same frigate we saw five days ago run into Havre."

"There is another lofty rigged ship away in south-west, sir," called out midshipman Burdett from the topgallant cross-trees, "I can make out her royals and topgallant sails."

"Ha! by Jove!" said our hero, "if this should be the 'Onyx;' and yet she would be no match whatever for this frigate. The situation is perilous," continued our hero to Bill Saunders who came to his side, knowing full well how deeply anxious his master must be, seeing the object he so ardently longed to behold, coming towards him.

"We must cross between that lugger and the chasse-mare, Bill. Get your men to the guns, I will take the helm and pass as close to her as I can. We will prevent this privateer lugger closing with her, and if the chasse-mare, with the red flag, hauls her wind, she may stand along shore, having the advantage of the breeze, and thus escape, for the frigate will not look to her."

"Aye, aye, sir. As soon as that fellow comes in range of our long eighteen-pounder, shall I give him a dose of round shot, and may-hap cripple him?"

"Yes, cripple him, by all means, Bill; bring down some of his spars, and we may get out of this scrape yet. Now, Master Burdett, look to the men and see they do not want for ammunition, for the lugger approaching us is a formidable opponent in men and metal."

Whilst speaking, Lieutenant Thornton kept his eye fixed upon the movements of the frigate. She was close hauled, and standing with her head to the eastward. She would thus intercept any

attempt of the "Ca-Ira" to gain the open sea; but his attention was more imperatively called to the "Etoile" privateer, on which, coming within range of his carronade, Bill Saunders opened fire, and with such exceeding good aim, that at the second discharge, he brought down the main lug, knocking the yard to splinters. This gave our hero an opportunity of tacking, and though the "Etoile" fired a broadside at him with her eight-pounders, she merely cut some tacks and sheets, which were immediately replaced.

The "Vengeance," on the starboard tack could now run close under the stern of the chasse-mare, which had already hauled her wind, keeping along shore to the eastward. Our hero could see by the white dresses on which the sun shone, that there were several females on the deck of the vessel; and his heart told him that Mabel was surely amongst them. In ten minutes he was nearly within hail, and with his glass could distinguish Mabel, Madame Coulancourt, and Julia, gazing towards the "Vengeance." The "Etoile" had rapidly repaired

her disaster, and was again steering towards them.

Lieutenant Thornton stood ready to hail the "Ca-Ira," as the "Vengeance" came tearing through the water under her immense lugs, over which were hoisted a kind of gaff-topsail, shaped like the lugs themselves. She presented a very beautiful sight, for the breeze was fresh and the sails all filled to their fullest extent. The captain of the "Ca-Ira" stood close to the topsail, ready to answer our hero's hail, whilst the females made anxious signals, shewing their joy at seeing him; waving his hat to them, Lieutenant Thornton, as the helm was put down a little, so that the "Vengeance" should range up partly alongside, addressed the captain of the "Ca-Ira," telling him not to attempt to leave the coast, but to keep close in with the land, and sooner than get within range of the frigate's guns, to run the vessel into some bight, saying that he hoped to induce the frigate to chase him, and thus leave the "Ca-Ira" free, and not to care about the privateer in their wake.

Whilst speaking, Julian Arden, who longed to get on board the "Vengeance," hailed Lieutenant Thornton to stand by and pick him up, and, notwithstanding the tears of Mabel, and the earnest entreaties of his mother and Julia, who in this moment of excitement betrayed the interest she felt in his safety, he threw himself overboard.

The "Vengeance" immediately backed her foresail, and ropes being thrown to the daring and gallant youth, he was safely hauled on board.

There was only time for an ardent pressure of the hand between the two friends, for the guns of the "Etoile" began to open upon them.

"Change your dress, Julian," said our hero, "you will find garments in the cabin; do you think they understand me on board the chasse-mare."

"No fear in the world of them," said Julian "Captain Bonafoux says he can outsail the 'Etoile,' and that he will run into a bight

where the frigate cannot come near. You need not be uneasy. Let us take this fellow; the frigate is full a league to leeward yet. Never mind my wet clothes, it's refreshing this deuced hot weather. Give me a berth for I see you are short handed."

"Thank God! there is a chance of their escaping, Julian; and I rejoice in having you by my side. Go, get arms, for I am determined to board this privateer, though he is full of men. I must try and cripple him first, though."

After several exchanges of broadsides, the heavy metal of the "Vengeance," well served, left the "Etoile," in half an hour, with only her mainmast standing, several of her crew killed, and numbers wounded. On board the "Vengeance," there were two killed and five wounded, and her mizenmast shot away, when suddenly putting her helm to port, Lieutenant Thornton ran her on board with such a severe shock that her injured foremast fell right along the deck, covering her guns and many of the men, beneath the folds of her immense lug.

Then, with the usual cheer of British seamen, the English commander, with Julian by his side, and followed by his daring and eager crew, jumped on deck. Almost the first opponent he encountered was Bertram Gramont. He had a sash tied round his waist, in which were a brace of pistols, and rushing upon our hero with his drawn sabre in his right hand, he discharged a pistol at his head as he leaped from the shrouds upon the deck of the "Etoile."

"Ah! Monsieur Gramont," said Lieutenant Thornton, the ball of his opponent's pistol passing through the breast of his jacket inflicting a mere scratch, "do we meet again?"

The Frenchman was a first rate swordsman, and a man of undoubted courage.

"Yes, Monsieur De Tourville that was, we do meet again, but this time you shall not escape me."

The Frenchman was mistaken. In general, English naval officers are not so skilful with the sword as French cavalry officers. Bertram

Gramont found, however, that he had his match in skill, and twice his match in power.

Whilst the short but fierce contest raged between them, two events took place that decided the fate of the "Etoile."

The sails over the guns had caught fire owing to some desperate fellows beneath turning one of them loaded with grape, towards the stern of the privateer, and applying a match, the iron shower actually slaughtering friend and foe. Captain Ovet was desperately wounded, and Captain Gaudet killed, with one or two of his men, whilst several of Lieutenant Thornton's men were wounded, but none killed.

The onset of Julian Arden and Bill Saunders carried all before them, when suddenly the flames burst up in a sheet, from the blazing lug sail. Whilst this was taking place, and Lieutenant Thornton had pressed his antagonist almost at the last gasp against the bulwarks, a figure crept out from under the long boat, between the masts, vith a cocked pistol in his hand — It was Augustine Vadier. Stealing

cautiously on, he gained the back of Lieutenant Thornton, and lifting the pistol with a smothered curse to within a few inches of his head—he was in the act of pulling the trigger, and our hero's fate would have been sealed, had not Bill Saunders, who in the midst of the fiercest strife, kept his eye upon his master, perceived the movements of Augustine Vadier, and with a bound across the deck, despite blows of pikes and cutlasses aimed at him in passing, reached the spot. Just as the villain raised the pistol, Bill's grasp was on his throat. Nevertheless the trigger was pulled, but the aim was disturbed. Our hero had just disarmed Bertram Gramont, inflicting a severe wound on his sword arm, but the tool was destined to slay his master. The ball from Vadier's pistol grazed the cheek of William Thornton, and passed through the brain of Bertram Gramont, who, falling back against the bulwarks, went over the side, a corpse.

"Curse you, you sneaking lubber," shouted Bill, as he raised the struggling form of Augus-

tine Vadier in his arms, "the death of a brave man is too good for you; die like a dog."

And, raising him in his powerful arms, he hurled him overboard.

Lieutenant Thornton saw the act, and would, if he could, have prevented it, but a rush of the enemy aft, separated him and Bill, and, after another furious struggle, the men of the "Etoile," without a commander, threw down their arms and surrendered. By great exertions the flames of the blazing lug were got under, and the efforts of the sailors were directed to separate the two vessels, and secure the prisoners. Julian Arden, who had fought most gallantly, and was unwounded, called our hero's attention to the movements of the frigate, "Virginie."

CHAPTER XIII.

So completely absorbed were all parties on board the "Vengeance" and the "Etoile," during their fierce and sanguinary struggle, that no attention had been paid to the movements of the frigate, till the thunder of her guns awoke them from their forgetfulness. Looking round, our hero perceived that the "Virginie" had altered her course, and was at that moment engaged in a combat with the strange sail they had seen in the distance some time back. A look through his glass satisfied Lieutenant Thornton that the stranger engaging the "Virginie" frigate, was

the "Onyx," Captain O'Loughlin. This startled him, for the "Onyx" carried only twenty-two guns, and her complement of men, unless recruited, was very short; besides, in tonnage she was scarcely more than half the size of the "Virginie," a large, and remarkably fine frigate.

At about a league's distance, the chasse-mare, the "Ca-Ira," was seen lying to under her fore lug and mizen, as if watching the sequel of events. In the meantime, by immense exertions, the fire on board the "Etoile" was entirely subdued, the wounded were all got together and placed in her cabin, under the care of a young surgeon belonging to the vessel, and the dead consigned to the resting-place of thousands. The "Etoile," totally dismasted, was allowed to drift out from the land, whilst the "Vengeance" was got clear for action; Lieutenant Thornton being resolved to do all he could to assist the "Onyx" against her formidable antagonist. Our hero had now but two-and-twenty men left fit for service, but these were

eager and enthusiastic. He had two eighteen-pound carronades, and with these he might do good service.

Leaving his late opponent perfectly helpless, except that two of her boats were still serviceable, in which her crew might escape if they liked, our hero, with his own wounded made as comfortable as circumstances would permit in the "Vengeance," refitted his mizen mast, and spliced as much of his rigging as had suffered damage, and then prepared to sail after the two combatants, which at that moment were running parallel with each other. It was very apparent, that Captain O'Loughlin, knowing how inferior he was to his opponent, was extremely desirous of avoiding having his sails and rigging cut to pieces by the "Virginie's" line of fire, which evidently wished to cripple the "Onyx," that she might not by any chance, escape. Just as the "Vengeance" was coming rapidly up, the "Virginie" wore, and came to again on the opposite tack, bringing a fresh broadside to bear upon the bows of the corvette. This manœuvre

the "Virginie" repeated twice, greatly to the annoyance of the "Onyx." Captain O'Loughlin was getting impatient at being so foiled, and unable, from inferior sailing, for the French frigate was remarkably fast, to pass ahead or astern of the "Virginie," ran right at her to windward. Just then the "Vengeance" opened fire upon the French frigate, having hoisted English colours, and with her long eighteen-pound carronades, her fire did considerable damage to the "Virginie's" rigging and yards; she was too low in the water to injure her crew; but using her heavy guns with great judgment, she completely cut away her braces and splintered her foreyard so much that the frigate was forced to turn her attention to her minor antagonist, whose matchless sailing qualities enabled her, by skilful manœuvring, to avoid the broadside of the enraged crew of the "Virginie." The "Onyx," by this time, was able, both standing on the larboard tack, to bring her broadside tc bear at pistol-shot distance; both vessels at the same time keeping up an animated fire of round,

grape and musketry. Owing to the press of sail under which the "Onyx" had approached, she ranged considerably ahead. The "Virginie" now bore up, and passing athwart the stern of the "Onyx," raked her, but the Onyx's men throwing themselves flat upon the deck, suffered but little. The "Vengeance" passed across the bows of the "Onyx," pouring the contents of her eighteen-pound carronades, crammed with grape and canister, into the quarter of the "Virginie," shattering her quarter galley, and besides wounding several of her men, cut the sheets of her mainsail so that the sail blew out unrestrained. A loud cheer burst from the crew of the "Onyx," and Captain O'Loughlin, springing into the mizen shrouds, waved his hat to our hero, who was standing returning his greeting on the carriage of a gun.

Enraged at the audacity of the "Vengeance," the "Virginie," by a masterly manœuvre, shot a head, and suddenly wearing, caught the "Vengeance" in stays, and for the moment not caring for the fire of the "Onyx," poured a deadly

broadside into the lugger, intending to sink her. The iron shower passed over the "Vengeance" like a thunder storm, leaving her totally dismasted, but, singular to say, killing only one man, and wounding three, a splinter unfortunately knocking down Master Burdett, as he sprung out of the way of the falling wreck. The brave youth was carried down into the cabin, and then Lieutenant Thornton, seeing he could do nothing more with the "Vengeance," ordered out the two boats left uninjured, saying:

"Now, my lads, as we can do nothing here, let us pull on board your old ship; they are short handed, and we may be of some service yet."

A loud cheer testified their eagerness to help their old commander; the boats were got out, and Captain O'Loughlin, seeing their intention, wore round and in five minutes they were alongside, and up upon the deck, where they were gladly received.

Captain O'Loughlin's left arm was in a sling, Lieutenant Pole was below, severely wounded, so that the arrival of their friends was most

opportune, our hero taking the post of First Lieutenant at once. Bill Saunders was received by his comrades with a hearty welcome. There were six or eight of the crew of the "Fox" schooner left on board the "Vengeance." Our hero told them, on leaving, to get her before the wind, under any sail they could manage to hoist on the stumps of their masts; for he had no doubt, notwithstanding the superior force of the "Virginie" the "Onyx" would yet gain the day. The French frigate by this time had a second time hauled up on her starboard tack, and thought to deliver her broadside with a raking effect; but the "Onyx" with fresh spirit, having repaired her rigging sufficiently, was ready for her. Led by two as brave and skilful officers as any in the Royal Navy, noted for having one of the best disciplined crews in the service, Captain O'Loughlin promptly threw her sails aback, and prevented the "Virginie" taking the favourable position she intended.

This manœuvre brought the "Virginie" with her stern actually pressing against the quarter of

the "Onyx," both crafts lying nearly in a parallel direction. The instant the two ships came in contact, each prepared to board the other. Lieutenant Thornton with a picked band, and with Julian Arden by his side, sprung to repel the overwhelming numbers of the enemy, who eagerly thought to overpower the boarders of the "Onyx." A desperate contest ensued. Twice did our hero, who appeared to have a charmed life, plant his foot upon the "Virginie's" deck, and twice was his gallant band driven back by the great superiority of numbers. Julian was felled by the butt of a musket, but Bill Saunders with a cheer, dashed headlong amidst the press, and catching him in his arms bore him safely to the corvette. The "Onyx's" marines kept up an incessant fire of musketry, which drove back the "Virginie's," though her marines, stationed along the whole length of the larboard gangway, kept up an incessant fire into the stern windows of the "Onyx," strewing the cabin deck with killed and wounded.

"You must get a main deck gun," said Lieu-

tenant Thornton to Captain O'Loughlin, "and put it into the port of the cabin window; I see it is cut down for that purpose."

"Yes," said O'Loughlin, "though contrary to the strict rules of the service, I cut down the sill of the cabin window, on each side next the quarter. You will find the gunner has tackles, and everything ready for transporting the gun to the new port, but it's a perilous duty, dear friend."

"Never mind that," said our hero, and calling Bill, and selecting a crew, with the gunner and his tackles, the gun was run out, and with a hearty cheer, fired. The very first discharge proved the great value of this new port, for, as was afterwards ascertained, four and twenty of the "Virginie's" crew were laid low; it actually swept the ship from her larboard bow to her larboard quarter, and was fearful in its effects. Meantime the musketry on both sides continued with terrible effect. A ball from the main top of the French ship unfortunately struck

O'Loughlin to the deck; it was a severe wound, but not mortal. He was just able to say:

"I give the command of the ship to Lieutenant Thornton of the 'Diamond,' as gallant an officer as ever breathed. Fight, my lads, as long as the old girl floats!"

A cheer, and a God bless you, passed from all as their gallant Captain was carried below.

Satisfied from the surgeon's report, that the wound was not mortal, the commander for the time threw all his energies and skill into action. The two vessels now remained on board each other for rather more than half-an-hour, when the "Virginie" began to fore reach. In a moment Lieutenant Thornton brought the second aftermost gun to bear, and its discharge cut away the head rails of the French frigate, and what was far more important, the gammoning of the bowsprit. The "Virginie" also, as she forged ahead, brought her guns to bear, and a desperate cannonade recommenced between the two—yard arm and yard arm. So well practised were the

crew of the "Onyx" that they fired as quick again as the "Virginie," whose hull was desperately shattered, her main topmast gone, and her foremast tottering, and in this condition she passed on out of gun-shot.

During this respite, Lieutenant Thornton, and the third lieutenant of the "Onyx," a Mr. Barker, a high-spirited young officer, who felt no pique whatever at his ship being worked by a senior officer, though of another ship, set to, to repair damages. The hull of the "Onyx" was but little damaged, but her rigging and sails were so cut to pieces, that for a time she remained unmanageable. She had also lost her main topsail yard, and her gaff was shot away, as well as her colours. She had, however, lashed a boat's ensign to the larboard, and a Union Jack to the starboard arm of her cross-jack yard. Our hero anxiously glanced around to see what had become of the "Vengeance" and the "Etoile." The chasse-mare, the "Ca-Ira," was out of sight. The "Vengeance," he perceived was with a jury mast and a double-reefed lug, making way before

the wind, shaping her course for England. The "Etoile" he could distinguish in shore with two small luggers and boats, towing her towards Havre to save her from capture. The "Etoile" troubled him but little, and the "Ca-Ira" he made no doubt would make the coast of England, and land her passengers. There was but little time for thought, for both ships were rapidly repairing damages to resume their deadly contest. The "Virginians," furious at being baffled and so desperately riddled and cut up by so inferior an antagonist, whilst the crew of the "Onyx" were enthusiastic, having full confidence in their young Commander, rejoicing at the same time that their Captain was not so dangerously wounded as was at first thought.

Lieutenant Thornton, after visiting O'Loughlin and Charles Pole, the latter almost insisting in rising to help, but falling back on making the attempt, returned to his post. Julian Arden was full of spirit and capable of filling an officer's berth for the time. There was glory to be obtained in thus baffling a frigate of a thousand

and ninety tons—whereas the "Onyx" was scarcely eight hundred—though a large class corvette, was but a very small frigate; her crew when complete, only mustered two hundred men, whereas the "Virginie" then amounted to three hundred. The "Virginie" it appeared afterwards, carried only twenty-eight guns, the "Onyx" twenty-one, but her reduced crew amounted to only one hundred and sixty, which with eighteen fresh hands that came on board with our hero, made her complement one hundred and seventy-eight.

Both ships, when they separated, presented a very shattered and woeful appearance; this was caused by the great quantity of sail under which they had engaged. Shattered spars, torn and riddled sails, ropes and ends were hanging in every direction.

Whilst refitting, the breeze increased, and as the crew of the "Onyx" were regarding their opponents, they beheld to their great satisfaction, their foremast fall over the side,

from the increased motion of the sea. It was then two hours after noon, but such had been the diligence of the "Onyx's" crew, that she was enabled, with the increasing breeze, to make sail on the larboard tack towards the "Virginie." Just as she opened fire, her antagonist hauled down her colours and surrendered; in fact, from the fall of her foremast she was in a perfectly defenceless state.

Whilst the "Onyx's" officers and crew are rejoicing over their victory—dearly bought, it is true—we will follow the movements of the chasse-mare "Ca-Ira," previous to, and after her escape out of, Havre.

CHAPTER XIV.

On casting anchor before the little village of Eure, some five leagues from Havre, Madame Coulancourt became intensely anxious about her son, but from this anxiety she was quickly relieved, as our readers already know.

As soon as the tide turned, the chasse-mare again weighed anchor, under a very light wind and a thick mist. This latter circumstance greatly pleased the Captain of the "Ca-Ira," as it would enable him to drop down the river without attracting observation. Knowing every

yard of the navigation, he continued safely descending with the tide, keeping well the western shore. The smuggler was one of the largest vessels of that class out of the port of Havre, and was notorious for the many successful trips she had made in the contraband trade. Captain Bonafoux was a rough, though a good kind of man in his way—faithful and stedfast to any bargain or contract in which he engaged.

Monsieur Plessis, who knew his character, had agreed, for a large sum, that he should either put them on board the "Vengeance" or a British vessel, or, failing in this, to land them on the English coast. At a late hour the ladies retired to rest in the large and well-arranged cabin.

Julian Arden and Jean Plessis continued on deck, extremely anxious, for the mist was so thick that the navigation of the river became critical; but Captain Bonafoux, who was quite at home, in either clear or foggy weather, assured them he was steering a straight course out to sea, though he feared small progress could be

made till sun-rise, and such was the case; for when the sun rose, and the breeze with it, and the fog lifted, he found he was only a mile off the port. He was startled on perceiving the "Etoile" privateer away to their right, and, some four miles to seaward, they caught sight of the "Vengeance;" they did not, however, see the frigate "Virginie."

Hoisting the red flag, the signal agreed upon, Captain Bonafoux bore away. As he did so, the "Etoille" put her helm up and slacked her sheets, in pursuit.

"That craft," said Julian Arden, "has evidently been watching for us. I wish to heavens I was on board the 'Vengeance,' for I am sure there will be a fight between that vessel and the 'Vengeance;' what is she called?"

"That is the 'Etoile' privateer, Captain Obet," replied the skipper of the 'Ca-Ira,' "but in this light wind I can outsail her. She is a very fine craft, but a dull sailer in light winds; she is under-masted. Mon Dieu!" he exclaimed, "look there," pointing seaward; "there is the

'Virginie' frigate, crowding sail, and heading as near as she can lie for the coast."

"Keep up the red flag, at all events," said Julian, greatly excited, "and stand to meet the 'Vengeance;' she sees us."

The hoisting of additional sail, the trampling of feet, and consequent bustle attending a chase, roused the females below from their slight slumbers, and, being intensely anxious, they were soon dressed and on deck.

Mabel, taking Julian's arm, eagerly questioned him as to which was the "Vengeance," for she at once perceived there was some new danger to apprehend.

"There is the 'Vengeance,' dear Mabel," replied Julian; "I wish I was on board her, and beside my gallant friend. That is the 'Etoile' privateer following us; William will surely fight her, to stop her pursuit."

"Ah," said Mabel, "that he will. Look! that ship is full of men; I wonder if William has as many on board the 'Vengeance.' She is coming towards us; what a handsome vessel she

is;" and her heart beat as she spoke with painful anxiety.

Julia now joined them, and Julian exclaimed: "By heaven! if she comes near enough I will swim on board her."

Julia felt that she changed colour, as he addressed those words to her, for Mabel went to her mother; but, turning away her face, she said, "That would be madness, Monsieur Julian."

Julian Arden was extremely glad of the society of Julia Plessis—her kindness of heart, sweet, cheerful disposition, and captivating manners, had won his esteem, and had not his love been previously given to Colonel Packenham's daughter, there is little doubt but that the very pretty Julia, notwithstanding her disparity of birth, would have won his affection.

"Recollect, Monsieur Julian," added Mademoiselle Plessis, "your mother and sister require your protection."

"They cannot be benefited by my staying here, Julia," said the young man, anxiously watching the 'Vengeance;' "I can swim like

a fish, and can be of service to my gallant friend."

On came the "Vengeance," and, as already related, our hero hailed and spoke the "Ca-Ira." Julian's jumping overboard created a painful sensation, but they saw he got safely on board the lugger. They witnessed the engagement between the two privateers; but, fearing the "Etoile" might win, or the frigate cut them off, Captain Bonafoux crowded all sail along the coast, keeping an anxious eye upon the contest.

The three females stood, eagerly watching, and listening to the remarks of the Captain to Monsieur Plessis. At length the former, with an oath, declared that the "Vengeance" had dismasted and taken the "Etoile." It was very evident by his tone and manner, smuggler as he was, that he felt as a Frenchman.

"Sacre Dieu! that Lieutenant Thornton must be le diable; with a handful of men, and only a few guns, to take the 'Etoile.' Ha! there goes the frigate's guns. The 'Virginie' is

engaged with another ship, not near her size. We must not loiter, or you, Madame, may pay the penalty."

And, despite Mabel's tears, and the entreaties of both mother and daughter, Captain Bonafoux bore away for the coast of England, leaving them all in a dreadful state of anxiety concerning the final fate of the "Vengeance."

It was Captain Bonafoux's intention to land them in a small bay to the eastward of Torquay. It was a sheltered bight, and, during the night, he would be able to put them on shore, scarcely three miles from the town of Torquay. To this arrangement the unhappy mother and daughter could make no objection.

With the fine breeze then blowing, the chasse-mare stood in for the coast of England, not without some apprehension on the part of the captain of falling in with either a privateer or a cruiser, under British colours, though Monsieur Plessis assured him he would be perfectly safe, and incur no risk whatever of being detained.

But it so happened that he made the coast during the night, and about early dawn was standing into the little, and then neglected bay of Babicomb. He was, however, seen by the coast-guard, and, immediately after coming to an anchor, a boat pulled by six oars, and an officer in the stern sheets, came off. The "Ca-Ira" had hoisted English colours. On coming alongside, Madame Coulancourt explained matters to the Lieutenant of the coast-guard, and, as the Captain of the "Ca-Ira" called himself a fisherman, and had neither arms, nor ammunition, nor cargo, on board, but had incurred a great risk to save English subjects and French Royalists from persecution and imprisonment, the officer was quite willing that he should land his passengers and set sail for France again.

Before the expiration of an hour, the whole party on board the "Ca-Ira," with the kind assistance of the coastguard, were safely landed with their effects, and the shelter of the station was afforded them till post-chaises could be procured to carry them to Torquay.

The joy Madame Coulancourt and Mabel would otherwise have felt, on setting foot once more upon England's soil, was damped by the uncertainty they felt respecting the fate of our hero and Julian Arden. Still they began to look forward with hope, and after two or three days' residence at an inn, in Torquay, then but an insignificant village, they started for London, where Monsieur Plessis had previously gone and hired a furnished house ready for their reception.

The morning after their arrival their joy and happiness was complete, for in looking over the "Times" paper, hoping for news, they saw a paragraph headed "Brilliant action of the 'Onyx' corvette with the fine French frigate the 'Virginie,' of twenty-eight guns, and capture of the latter after a desperately contested action of nearly four hours. The 'Oynx' corvette arrived the day before yesterday in Plymouth, with the 'Virginie' French frigate of twenty-eight guns in tow, and under the temporary command of Lieutenant Thornton of the 'Diamond.' The

famous French privateer 'Le Vengeance' was also in company. It seems that this celebrated privateer is the one the 'Diamond' frigate, under the command of Sir Sidney Smith, attempted to cut out of the Port of Havre, but owing to untoward circumstances, caused by wind and tide, failed, and Sir Sidney Smith with his officers became prisoners. The 'Vengeance,' it seems was a second time attempted to be cut out of a French port by the boats of the 'Onyx,' commanded by Captain O'Loughlin and Lieutenant Thornton; and this time they successfully accomplished their object, capturing a fine armed brig at the same time. The 'Vengeance' made a most furious resistance, being chained to the shore and assisted by a body of troops on the beach; but the gallantry of our sailors overcame all obstacles. We regret to add, that in the contest with the 'Virginie,' Captain O'Loughlin was severely wounded, as well as his first Lieutenant, Mr. Charles Pole. The 'Onyx' was in consequence placed under the command of Lieutenant Thornton, and after a severe contest, the 'Virginie,'

being dismasted and unmanagable, surrendered. There is a good deal of mystery in this gallant affair, which we are unable to explain ; but it is confidently rumoured in naval circles that this Lieutenant Thornton claims to be the only son and heir of the late Sir Oscar de Bracy, governor of——; and that a volunteer on board the 'Onyx,' who behaved most gallantly in action, of the name of Julian Arden, claims to be the next representative to the title and estates of Sir Granby Etherton. Be this as it may, to all appearance there will be something to be done in our law courts if these rumours turn out correct."

"Dear mother," said Mabel, her cheeks glowing with excitement and delight, "all are safe and well, except generous Captain O'Loughlin, and I trust in God he will soon recover."

"How merciful and how gracious," returned Madame Coulancourt, her eyes moist with tears of thankfulness, "is Divine Providence, in not only shielding all those dear to us, but covering them with well merited fame."

"Ah! deeply grateful indeed we ought to be," said Mabel, and throwing her arms round her mother's neck, she fairly shed tears of joy at being thus suddenly relieved from deep anxiety.

Julia Plessis became extremely thoughtful, and apparently in much less joyous spirits, after her arrival in London. Mabel perceived this change in her friend, but imputed it to her secret regret at leaving France. Therefore she did not make any remark upon it.

Whilst waiting anxiously, but with grateful and contented hearts, for the arrival in London of Lieutenant Thornton and Julian Arden, we will take a glance at the proceedings of Sir Howard Etherton, during the four years from the period when he first became possessed of the title and estates of the Etherton's. Though perfectly aware of Mabel's claims to the fortune bequeathed her out of those estates, yet, satisfied in his own mind that she would never be able to prove either her birth or right, he congratulated himself on his selfish

and unnatural conduct. So intensely disagreeable did Sir Howard render their home, that two of the sisters made runaway marriages, neither of them, as far as birth was concerned, very distinguished. Though entitled to a certain amount of fortune, Sir Howard refused to give a shilling till they were of age, and left the two girls and their young husbands, ensigns in a marching regiment, to make the best of it. Miss Jane remained sole mistress of Etherton Hall, but so closely watched, and so limited in her expenditure, that even she, if she could have found an ensign bold enough to take her, would have gladly abandoned her single state of blessedness. She was not destined, however, long to remain even the nominal mistress of Etherton Hall, for Sir Howard, penurious and avaricious, and inwardly prompted by some feeling of insecurity as to his hold of the Etherton estates, resolved to marry, and to marry for mere wealth.

Possessed of an old title, a handsome person and specious manners, when it suited him

to disguise his natural disposition, he was not long before he gained a lady who, as far as money was concerned, was unexceptionable. Miss Brabazon was the only daughter of a wealthy banker. She was nine-and-twenty, but acknowledged only three-and-twenty summers; was very tall, very masculine, and exceedingly plain. Her dependants and domestics declared she had a violent and headstrong temper. The world, in general, supposed her to be the reverse. We do not always display our amiable qualities to our friends, and for the same reason, we suppose, we keep back our little foibles. Miss Euphemia Brabazon started in life with the intention of captivating, at least, an Earl's son. Eighty thousand pounds fortune, her father having been heard to declare would be his daughter's portion. She had waited from the age of eighteen to two-and-twenty very patiently for a coronet, but those pretty appendages were not to be had at that period quite so readily as some years afterwards. Four years passed and she remained a spinster. Ominous

nine-and-twenty came, but no earl. At a civic entertainment, Miss Brabazon was introduced to Sir Howard Etherton, who was looking for £80,000 or £100,000, if it were to be had; he did not see Miss Brabazon's countenance when he danced with her, for a draft on the bank of Brabazon, Brassington, and Blinkiron floated in the air between her sharp features and the baronet's eyes. Finally, the baronet proposed. Miss Euphemia thought of her next birthday: she would be thirty! A baronet, and of a long line of ancestors, wealthy and handsome; much superior to many of the lords she had seen years back, and thought so much of. Besides, Sir Howard with a rent roll of fifteen thousand a year, must have been fascinated with her person. Sir Howard proposed, and was blushingly accepted. Mr. Brabazon unhesitatingly gave his consent, and they were married. Some how, the banker induced his son-in-law, by laying before him a plan for increasing his £80,000 to £200,000 in a year or two, to allow the £80,000

to remain in the bank, and Sir Howard became a sleeping partner.

It is said that persons of a similarity of dispositions always agree. We do not pretend to dispute this question; all we can say is, that Lady Howard and Miss Etherton resembled one another to an extraordinary degree in despotism; but, alas! Etherton Hall, though a large and spacious mansion, was not nearly large enough to hold the wife and sister of Sir Howard.

Consequently, Miss Etherton abandoned the field in one short month, and took herself off, and went to live with her mother; and as no human being ever doubted her being of age, she demanded her fortune with interest. Her brother, who never parted with money till forced, refused the interest; so Miss Jane placed her cause in the hands of a solicitor, who not only perfectly agreed with Miss Etherton, as to her rights, but also agreed to take herself and fortune, for better and worse, and thus save costs.

This offer Miss Jane accepted, and the last in the female line of the Ethertons resigned her maiden name. Mr. Chatterton, the solicitor, soon forced Sir Howard to pay, not only the fortune, but a bill of costs, proportioned to the value of his spouse. Lady Etherton declared her to be an unnatural, degenerate girl, to marry an attorney. "Heavens! what has the world come to!"

Such was the posture of affairs at Etherton Hall; the only difference perceptible to the domestics was, now that they had a mistress and no master, for strange to say, Lady Etherton had completely gained the ascendancy. They had one child, a boy, the future heir, as Lady Etherton declared, of unbounded wealth; for the firm of Brabazon, Brassington, and Blinkiron, was in a most prosperous state; their speculalations numerous, and their gains astounding. Sir Howard was led to believe that in two years more his share would be near £300,000.

One morning at breakfast, Lady Etherton happened to be reading the "Morning Post,"

whilst Sir Howard was examining into the merits of a peregord pie.

"Good heavens, Howard!" exclaimed her ladyship, dropping the paper and turning pale, "what is the meaning of this?"

"Of what, my dear," returned the amiable husband, suspending his operations.

"Why, good God! there can be no meaning in this strange paragraph. Who is Sir Oscar de Bracy, and what Mr. Julian Arden is this who has the presumption to claim your family name; and not only claims the name, but, the editor of this paper says, is a claimant to the Etherton title and estates. It must be a vile libel, and the fellow ought to be horsewhipped and then prosecuted."

The knife and fork fell from Sir Howard's hands; he turned exceedingly pale, saying, "Good God! how odd, pray shew me the paper."

"Why you look as pale as a ghost, Howard," said her ladyship, "is there really anything in this paragraph?" and she handed her spouse

the paper. Sir Howard's hand shook as he took it, and read the same account of the brilliant action, between the "Onyx" and the "Vengeance," that Madame Coulancourt and Mabel had read that very morning in the "Times," only that in the "Morning Post" there was a great deal more of family concerns; the writer seeming to be well informed as to how matters stood with respect to the Etherton title and estate.

The baronet remained several moments plunged in gloomy thought; he was younger than his wife, but looked older, for his habits of life and fretful temper and disposition had brought a look of premature care on his features. His thoughts reverted to the past, and his early association with William Thornton; whom, secretly, he did all in his power to degrade and humiliate; of Mabel, cruelly treated by his father, and scorned and disowned by himself; and now the man he hated, for no other reason than his superiority over him in all things, had not only achieved

fame, but would most likely succeed to a noble fortune and a honoured name, whilst the despised Mabel and her brother would, he could not conceal from himself, deprive him of rank and fortune. These thoughts and reflections take time to write, but they rush with lightning speed through the brain.

"What on earth can make you so gloomy, Howard," said Lady Etherton, rather startled, "is there any foundation for the strange assertion in this paper? Who is Julian Arden?"

"I am to suppose he is my uncle's son," said Sir Howard, with some hesitation. He then explained to his astonished lady how his father's elder brother had been married; though no one knew anything about it till long after his death; and that his father always doubted it, and that in fact there were no proofs as yet shewing that he had been, or that Julian and Mabel Arden were his children.

"Then I am to understand," said Lady

Etherton with contemptuous bitterness, "that supposing these Ardens can prove their father's marriage and their own birth, you will be deprived of title and estates"

"Such, I suppose, is the law of the land," said the baronet, gloomily. "You can readily imagine this stroke of fortune was unavoidable on my father's part; he could not, when he succeeded to the title and estates of the Ethertons, be aware that his succession was illegal."

"A poor consolation to me, sir," almost fiercely returned the lady, pale with vexation, "with my great expectations, I might have looked higher."

"There is no doubt, madam," said Sir Howard, bitterly, "but that you might and did look for a higher rank in your husband, but in doing so, you lost what our neighbours the French call your 'premiere jeunesse.'" So saying, Sir Howard rose from his seat.

"You add insult to deception," cried the enraged Lady Etherton; "thank God, my fortune is secured from such a fatality as—"

The door opened, and a servant entered the room with a letter for Sir Howard.

"A man on horseback, Sir Howard, left this, from your solicitor, and says it is most important."

Lady Etherton paused whilst the baronet broke the seal; the letter contained only three lines. Stunned, incapable of uttering a word, he stood bewildered, confused, and powerless. Recovering her nerves, Lady Etherton advanced, and, with a look of contempt, took the note from her husband's hands, and, cast her eyes upon the lines; the next moment she uttered a faint exclamation, and fell back upon a chair, with difficulty keeping herself from fainting. The words which caused this acute sensation of suffering in husband and wife were as follows:—

"I am so confounded, Sir Howard, that I can scarcely write the words. The Bank of Brabazon, Brassington, and Blinkiron, has stopped payment; lose not a moment in coming up to town.

"Yours obediently,

"D. C. Stripem."

CHAPTER XV.

As soon as Lieutenant Thornton arrived in Plymouth with the "Virginie" and "Vengeance," his first care, after the usual formalities had been gone through, was to get Commander O'Loughlin and Lieutenant Pole on shore, both being so far recovered as to bear moving, and the physician who was consulted on their reaching Plymouth, decided that they should be immediately removed into the country, declaring that a few weeks would completely restore them.

Captain O'Loughlin wrote immediately to his betrothed, Agatha, and made as light of his

wounds as possible. He would not allow his friend to remain longer with him; he was able to move about with a crutch, and the surgeon assured him he would not have the least lameness in a month. Lieutenant Pole was also fast recovering.

Excessively anxious concerning Madame Coulancourt and his beloved Mabel, whom he still hoped had safely reached England, Lieutenant Thornton and his friend Julian Arden prepared to leave Plymouth for London, feeling assured that if the party he was so anxious about had reached England, he would surely hear of them there. But Julian Arden, before he left Plymouth, was destined to suffer a severe and stunning misfortune.

To his extreme alarm, he heard a rumour that agitated him greatly. Lieutenant-General Pakenham was to have been Governor of Plymouth, but the alarming illness of his eldest daughter, brought on by exposure, it was said, to the pestiferous climate of Sierra Leone, had obliged him to decline the post, and to leave England for

some month's residence in Madeira. This was all he could learn in Plymouth, but it caused him great agony of mind. He feared his betrothed had imbibed the seeds of that fatal fever which raged at the time of their meeting; and became doubly anxious to reach London, where he hoped to hear intelligence from the General's solicitor, whose address he had.

Need we paint the joy and rapture of the lovers when they met. Many of our fair readers, no doubt, have experienced the same—felt the like intensity only once in life. To those who have not, we can only say we trust it is before them. From joy to sorrow is but a step. Poor Julian Arden learned, with feelings impossible to describe, that General Pakenham's daughter had died in Madeira, and that her distracted father was remaining there for his own health, to recover from the terrible shock at losing his beloved child.

Minute details, at this period of our story, would only tire the patience of our readers; neither will we inflict on them dull law

matters. It will be quite sufficient to say that, after six month's process in law courts, Julian's and Mabel's births and right were fully established, as well as the former's right to the title and estate of Etherton, though Howard Arden—for to that name he was forced to return—threw every possible difficulty and obstruction in the way. Sir Julian Etherton generously offered to divide the property, which offer was scornfully refused. Mr. Arden, his spouse, and child, retired into Yorkshire, where they lived upon the interest of £10,000, recovered from the wreck of the firm of Brabazon, Brassington, and Blinkiron. Whether they lived happily or not we cannot say; our readers may judge by their knowledge of their characters.

Sir Julian Etherton continued the handsome fortune settled on the widow of the late baronet, who very graciously acknowledged and thankfully enjoyed the gift as long as she lived.

Lieutenant Thornton completely established his claims to the name, estates, and private property of the late Sir Oscar de Bracy. How-

ever, before this took place he was made a Commander. With the immense personal property of his lamented father, Sir Oscar purchased a fine estate, not many miles from Etherton Hall. Over his entire property Monsieur Jean Plessis was made agent, whilst Madame Coulancourt bestowed upon that gentleman a sum of £5,000, to be, if necessary, a marriage portion for his daughter Julia. Our hero and his attached friend, O'Loughlin, were united to their fair betrothed in the same place and at the same time.

Julian was sad and dispirited, but strove all in his power not to show his deep and heartfelt affliction at the loss of his tenderly-loved Cherry Packenham.

Some eight months after his marriage, to the intense grief of his beloved Mabel, our hero accepted the command of the captured "Virginie," accounted one of the handsomest frigates in either the English or French service. Post-Captain O'Loughlin was also to take the command of a forty-four-gun frigate, and both sailed for the Mediterranean to join the fleet under Rear-

Admiral Nelson. They were present at the battle of the Nile, where the gallantry and skill with which Sir Oscar brought his ship into action, and the part he performed, elicited the admiration of all, and won the praise of the gallant Nelson himself.

Sir Julian Etherton so distinguished himself in his character of volunteer, that he was offered a commission, but he begged to remain as he was; his devoted attachment to Sir Oscar would not allow him to leave him. The year following, the renowned "Virginie" was at Acre, and there our hero once more embraced his friend Sir Sidney Smith.

Peace being concluded, the "Virginie" returned to England, when Sir Oscar retired, to the heartfelt joy of his still fair and beautiful wife, from the service; and, shortly after, Captain O'Loughlin did the same. Time and active service had softened the grief of Sir Julian Etherton. Constantly in the society of the amiable and engaging Julia Plessis, the young baronet finally, from feeling and association,

became tenderly attached to her, and ended by making the devoted and always attached Julia his wife, an act he never regretted.

Let not our readers imagine for a moment that the generous and simple-hearted coxswain, William Thornton, was forgotten by our hero, who would have loaded him with gifts, and built him a house on his own estate, but the old and happy coxswain loved his little cottage. The wish of his heart was gratified; his darling *protegée* was the pride of the service he loved, and every year, as long as his powers remained, he became an honoured guest at Sir Oscar's.

Honest Bill Saunders accompanied Sir Oscar through all his perils as his favourite and attached coxswain, receiving many a sword from conquered ships, and proud he was on those occasions. Sir Oscar had purchased the famous lugger the "Vengeance;" she was fitted out after the peace as a schooner-yacht, with Bill for skipper. For many years Bill was the admiration of all the jolly tars he encountered in his frequent rambles. To them he used to

relate his adventures in France, and especially he recounted the scientific manner in which he performed the part of a deaf and dumb Frenchman, and, in giving illustrations, he uttered such a succession of guttural sounds as startled his hearers. At length, Bill married, and then his rambles were confined to his comfortable home on his master's estate. The young De Bracys, in after years, dearly loved to visit Bill, his smiling wife, and his children; to listen to the wonderful yarns he spun of his master's and his own adventures.

Many were the presents and marriage portions sent over to France to good Dame Moret and her daughters.

Now, gentle reader, our yarn is spun. If this unpretending story enables you to pass an hour free from the cares of the world, our object will have been accomplished.

THE END.

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